



THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF  
THOMAS BOSTON OF ETTRICK

A THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.  
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH





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REV. THOMAS BOSTON



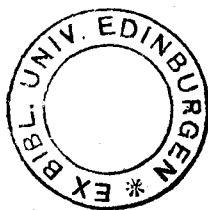


# THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THOMAS BOSTON OF ETTRICK

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## SCOPE OF THE THESIS

THE life of Thomas Boston, 1676-1732, Minister first at Simprin, then at Ettrick, dates the post-Covenanting period of our ecclesiastical history, and reflects its chief movements. In the reign of William, 1689-1702, the recognition of the intrinsic power of the Church, the granting of Episcopal toleration, and the passing of the Act of Patronage, were the dominant issues. During the reign of Anne, 1702-1714, the historic event of the Union of the Parliaments, and the imposition of the Oath of Abjuration were all-important. With the accession of George I., 1714-1727, the unsettlement caused by "The Fifteen" and the necessary reimposition of the Abjuration Oath affected the life of the Church; and in the same reign, and from within the Church itself, there arose the "Marrow" Controversy. Boston died in the reign of George II., and before the First Secession of 1733.

The scope of the thesis will be to show how the principal events and movements of the period, with the exception of the matter of Patronage, to which he scarcely refers, entered into Thomas Boston's experience.

In the chapter on the "Marrow" Controversy there have been included the text of the General Assembly's Act of 1720, the text of the Representation of 1721, and a document published by Principal Hadow, which gives the official position.

## REFERENCES

- In the references, “Memoirs”=“Memoirs of the Life, Time, and Writings of the Reverend Thomas Boston,” by the Rev. George H. Morrison, M.A., Edinburgh, 1899.
- “Memoirs, Low’s”=“A General Account of my Life, by Thomas Boston,” by the Rev. George D. Low, M.A., London, 1908.
- “Works”=“The Complete Works of the Late Rev. Thomas Boston, Ettrick,” edited by the Rev. Samuel M‘Millan ; in twelve volumes, London, 1854.

## CHAPTER I

### FIRST YEARS AND FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

“ I was born of honest parents, of good reputation among their neighbours.” (Memoirs, p. 5.)

THOMAS BOSTON was born at Duns on the seventeenth of March, 1676, and in the Tenement now marked with a commemorative inscription. The date of his baptism is the twenty-first of March. The local pronunciation of the name is “ Bowston.” Thomas was the youngest of the seven children (four sons and three daughters) of John Boston and Alison Trotter. The family had poor health, the burden of which Thomas did not escape, but laboured under during his whole life. As to worldly circumstances, it appears that John Boston, the cooper of Duns, enjoyed a moderate prosperity, owned some property—the Tenement above mentioned—but suffered to the spoiling of his goods under the severe exactions of the laws against non-conformity to the Episcopal way. Perhaps his traditions, received as they were from the West Country and through his father, Andrew Boston, who came to Duns from Ayr, taught him the duty of protest. He suffered imprisonment, lying for a time in the cell of the old Townhouse in the Square of Duns. The additional fine, which was imposed in sterling, amounted to fifty pounds ; and a request for an abatement, made to Sheriff-depute Martin by Mrs Boston, was met with insulting refusal. This payment must have depleted family

resources. The likelihood is that these occurrences belong to the period subsequent to the rigorous Test Act of 1681. Thus they set the earliest experiences of Thomas Boston into the hard paths of poverty.

Sufficient has been given to indicate Boston's earliest religious environment. The genuine piety of this Scottish home directed first interests, so that he could note in the *Memoirs* :—" By the time I was seven years old, I read the Bible with delight." Nevertheless, this is qualified by what is surely an adult reflection :—" Meanwhile I know nothing induced me to it, but the natural vanity of my mind, and curiosity as about some Scripture-histories. However, I am thankful that it was at all made my choice early, and that it hath been the study of my ripest years." <sup>1</sup> The children of this non-conformist family must have been allowed to attend the Parish Church, for Boston has it on record that he was accustomed to give " suit and presence " <sup>2</sup> there. Yet no mention is made of Mr William Gray, except as " the curate of Duns," <sup>3</sup> whose incumbency extended from 1666 to 1689, and who was deposed that year for refusing to read the proclamations of the Estates and to pray for William and Mary. The fact is that determinative religious influences came otherwise. Without doubt, the momentous events of the Covenanting days would leave their mark. Tales of Pentland, Drumclog and Bothwell, made " Covenanters " of mere children. Events taught the conflict of the Kirk right early. That is why the initial reference to Prelacy, that is to be found in the *Memoirs*, has over against it the painful association of the sufferings of a father. " When I was a little

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

boy," writes his son, "I lay in the prison of Duns with him to keep him company, the which I have often looked on as an earnest of what might be abiding me ; but hitherto I have not had that trial." <sup>1</sup> This persecuting of the head of the family was bound to have permanent results : on the brothers, sisters and mother, though their attainments in religion were average ; on the youngest of the name, his father's companion in zealous confession of faith. In this, as in countless instances, a positive spirit of religious heroism was carried forward into the post-Covenanting period, intensifying faithfulness, and vitalising the life of the Church.

#### THE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL

"And this was the education I had at school, which I left in the harvest of 1689, being then thirteen years and above five months."  
(Memoirs, p. 12.)

There are but notes given on the Grammar-school period, which extended from 1685 to the harvest of 1689, with the omission of one summer. James Bullerwell, the "Dominie," is named without other mention. The curriculum was designed to secure one thing, namely, mastery in Latin. A long working day, a full year's programme with the break of only a few weeks in the summer, the enforced necessity of speaking the language both in schoolroom and playground, all made out the result. The usual Latin authors were read. A Statement to the Commission of Parliament of 1690 shows that at the period religious instruction was given on the Saturday forenoons, and dealt with :—"Rudimenta Pietatis,"

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 6.



a “ Review of the Shorter Catechism and Scripture Proofs,” “ Confessio Fidei,” “ Dialogi Sacri,” and Buchanan’s “ Latin Psalter.” Something of that order of studies would maintain in Duns. The one grammar was Despauter’s. A senior class studied Vossius’s “ Elements of Rhetoric ” and Buchanan’s “ History of Scotland.” A beginning was made with Greek. In compliment to the specialised training Boston writes at the end :—“ I saw no Roman author, but what I found myself in some capacity to turn into English, . . . but we were not put to be careful about proper English.” <sup>1</sup> The date is given for the commencement of Greek, the fifteenth of May, 1689. The texts used were :—portions of St John’s Gospel and of St Luke’s, and selections from The Acts of the Apostles. There is no indication that Boston ever read the Greek classics. Excerpts he would certainly peruse, but his studies were limited to the New Testament.

The disposition of this lad, whom John Boston wished to advance in learning, is accurately described from these early years. It is that he was “ timorous and hard to enter on, but eager in the pursuit, when once entered.” <sup>2</sup>

### THE EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION

“ Two of Mr Erskine’s first texts were : ‘ Behold the lamb of God ! ’ and ‘ O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come ? ’ ” (Memoirs, p. 9.)

In the end of the summer of 1687, an influence came into the life of Thomas Boston, and such an experience was his, as ultimately decided his ministry.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Under the liberty proclaimed by King James, and beneficial to Presbyterians, though not intended for them, Mr Henry Erskine, the ejected Minister of Cornhill, resumed preaching. As the result of attending a meeting held at Newtoun of Whitsome, Boston, then a lad of twelve, passed through the experience of conversion. Henry Erskine preached in a rousing and searching strain, as this specimen of discourse, conserved in "The Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine," will sufficiently indicate :— "What shall become of haters of religion? What shall become of persecutors and oppressors, of all railers and revilers, of all who spend their time and strength in the service of sin? I tremble to think what a great part of mankind shall be shut up in the lowest hell, fettered in darkness, chained in sorrow, burnt up with the violent flames of their own lusts to all eternity." <sup>1</sup> So spake a Minister who had undergone persecutions and imprisonment. His sufferings, both in himself and in the minds of others, empowered his message. Set in terms of mediæval terrors and potent to inspire fear and urgent decision, his was indeed a ministry of repentance.

The results on Boston were marked. As was the case of others similarly affected, he "kept the Kirk" <sup>2</sup> no more and showed a decided aversion to those of the Episcopal way. He began to pray in earnest, and to attend for "ordinary" Mr Henry Erskine's meeting at Revelaw. He listened with interest to the spiritual conversation that passed on the journeys. He found place in boyhood's thinking for such a

<sup>1</sup> "The Life and Diary of Ebenezer Erskine," D. Fraser, p. 519.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 8.

phrase as “ the corruption of my nature,” <sup>1</sup> and even came to sense what was “ of a legal disposition and way.” <sup>2</sup> Then he wrestled with the fear that, since the number of the tribes was made up, sovereign election might have decreed his exclusion. There is a record that he arranged with two school-mates to have meetings for prayer, reading and spiritual conference—bless the lads who imitated what was an evidence of the quickened religious life of their district ! Further, he would make vows for the saying of so many prayers a day ; but in the outcome he found this unhelpful. Lastly, he had a zeal for suffering, which was more a tribute to the immediate past than a preparation for his day.

Boston did arrive at and was never without that affection which is at the heart of religion ; but, since it was Mr Henry Erskine who had the forming of his faith, salvation meant for him, primarily in experience and abidingly in reflection, absolute acceptance, as against condemnation, corruption, the error of the legal way, and eternal punishment. It was this interest that predisposed his mind to the “ Marrow ” doctrine of assurance.

### WAYS AND MEANS

“ Hereby I was discouraged, and had some thoughts of betaking myself to a trade.” (Memoirs, p. 13.)

The interval of two years between his leaving school and going to College passed variously. The year 1690 saw the Presbyterians in possession of Duns Kirk and Mr Henry Erskine preaching there on the weekly market-days, with soldiers called out,

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

as a rule, to guarantee protection against the Jacobite party. Although the circumstances of the town were extreme, Boston reports that there took place a revival of religion. With regard to his youthful convert's plans for life, the presence of Mr Henry Erskine must have made the urge towards the ministry the more insistent. However, the question of ways and means remained a problem. In a kind of despair Boston thought of a trade, which project his father vetoed. As an expedient, father and son journeyed to Edinburgh for the purpose of putting Boston into the service of Dr Rule, the Principal of the College ; but this miscarried. Ultimately, local employment was obtained in the office of Mr Alexander Cockburn, Notary. As a training, this "helped to the style of papers,"<sup>1</sup> as well as provided a knowledge of law and legal terms, the which is in abundant evidence throughout the writings.

Meanwhile, the youth disciplined himself to private study. When it was evident that the way to College was to be opened up, and with its near prospect, diligence in preparation was increased. He writes :—"I began on the fifteenth of October to expound the Greek New Testament, which, I think, I completed betwixt that and the first of December."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the spiritual preparation of these days, and remarkable in one of his years, was Boston's constant exercise in private prayer. It is a fact, never ceasing to touch the mind with awe, that continuously, and increasingly to the development of experience, nothing was done by this man without the acknowledgement of prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

## CHAPTER II

# THE ARTS COURSE, AND THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

## THE ARTS COURSE

“ I was abundantly soon put to College (age 15), the manner kindly ordered that I was beholden to none.” (Memoirs, p. 16.)

THOMAS BOSTON'S preliminary examination, conducted by Mr Herbert Kennedy on the first of December, 1691, seems to have been chiefly “ad aperturam” reading of the Greek New Testament. The student passed out with so much credit that he was immediately placed in the “super-class.” This meant that Greek was not studied in Arts, and explains a later, rueful comment :—“ I often have regretted my not having learnt more Greek than the New Testament, and never got that loss made up in any good measure.”<sup>1</sup> The “ambulatory” system then maintaining in College allowed for Regent Kennedy's taking his student in all subjects during the three years' course ; so that with him for his first year Boston took the second year's subjects of Logic and Metaphysics, and thereafter, in the “magistrand” classes, Ethics and General Physics. The Session lasted from the end of December to May.

For these years that were difficult personally, reticence permitted but few entries in the Memoirs. Boston stayed in a private house, where he could

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Low's, p. 18.

diet himself. He lived sparingly, "more than was needful or reasonable,"<sup>1</sup> he frankly admits, seldom went about, but concentrated on his studies. Recognising that College was an opportunity, hard won for him, he made every effort towards improvement. It is not surprising that in his second year he suffered severely in health, and became subject to fainting turns. Things were better in the third year, because he "in point of diet managed more liberally."<sup>2</sup> As to progress, Boston offers a certification that he reached to a competent understanding of the subjects, that he always took pains with what was before him, and satisfied the Regent.

How many students could give the cost of their Arts Course? Boston does :—For Regent's fees, College dues and maintenance, the sum of one hundred and twenty-eight pounds, fifteen shillings and eight pence Scots. Let this be set down in the annals of undergraduate life as something near a record for ways and means !

The laureation—it was laureation those less easy days—took place on the ninth day of July, 1694. This was safely accomplished, after a first disappointing journey to Town, when the day intimated was not kept to ; and after a second adventurous one, on which Boston was almost pressed into the King's service. The Graduation Register shows that he signed "Thomas Boston," a change of spelling in the surname from the matriculation "Boustoun." The Memoirs and documents in Kirk Session minutes are signed "Boston."

Circumstances were now more comfortable for the graduate and prospective divinity student, for in

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the summer he received a bursary of eighty pounds Scots, from the Presbytery of Duns. Preparation for the Hall consisted in going over minutely that compendious and greatly detailed manual of doctrine, "Paræus on Ursin's Catechism." Weemse's "Christian Synagogue," which dealt with Old Testament topics, he used as a preparation for the Hebrew Class.

### THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

"It was heavy to me that I was taken from the School of Divinity." (Memoirs, p. 29.)

Boston's solitary session of the Theological Curriculum lasted from January to April, 1695. Divinity was the chief subject taught to men who were to be for the most part doctrinal preachers; for doctrine, by Covenants, Confession and Catechisms, stood within the common interest of the Church in that instructional period. The only other regular class was the Hebrew one, taught by Mr Alexander Rule, the son of the Principal. Boston confesses to having had "no remarkable advantage" <sup>1</sup> thereby; but in later years he reverted to this neglected half of his curriculum. Time being, the attention of the young man's mind was all for the subject taught by "the great Mr George Campbell." <sup>2</sup>

Of the many text-books available, and most of them works in Latin from Dutch Universities, the Divinity Professor's selections were:—"Rijssenius's Compend," taught privately to beginners, and, because of the large place given to the discussions of the Covenants, one takes it, "Essenius's Compend."

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

The work prescribed for our student comprised a paraphrase of Isaiah xxxviii. 1-9, a lecture on Proverbs i., and an exegesis, "De Certitudine Subjectiva Electionis." Boston tells that at a Private Society he read an exposition, "De Jure Divino Presbytatus," a topic obviously directed to the position of Presbytery under the Revolution Settlement, which established it on expediency, as being agreeable to the wish of the majority, and not on divine right. In after days, Boston had to encounter the dissenters, whose objection to the Settlement turned on this point.

A certificate of diligence, received from Professor Campbell, is interesting for its form, and bore "that the student had diligently attended the profession, had dexterously acquitted himself in the several essays prescribed, and had behaved himself inoffensively, gravely and piously." <sup>1</sup> Boston's own characterisation of his Professor, while quite informal, is no less to the point:—"He was a man of great learning, but excessively modest, undervaluing himself, and much valuing the tolerable performances of his students." <sup>2</sup>

Agreeable to the special provisions then allowed, Boston's divinity studies were proceeded with privately and under the supervision of a Presbytery. This could not be wholly satisfactory, and one cannot help thinking that, for all his great gifts and application, Thomas Boston was the worse for it in the initial stages of his ministry. However, circumstances dictated. He tried teaching, was "Dominie" at Glencairn for one month, felt ill at ease in the appointment, returned the boys their Candlemas gift of ten shillings sterling, left abruptly, and was

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



glad of a tutorship. His charge, Master Andrew Fletcher of Aberlady, whose widowed mother had married Colonel Bruce of Kennet, Clackmannan, was a pupil of the High School of Edinburgh. Boston saw in the appointment an opportunity of "waiting upon the School of Divinity."<sup>1</sup> He even managed to put in an attendance of two weeks, and he delivered a homily; then to his bitter disappointment he was removed with his pupil to Kennet. Yet there were compensations. The supervision of a lad attending the Grammar-school at Clackmannan, and the giving of only elementary instruction to Masters Alexander Bruce and James Bruce, left time for personal matters. There was leisure to study; there was the opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of Ministers and Church people in the neighbourhood.

Although not actually appointed to the duty, Boston, in the absence of Master and Mistress at the beginning of his service at Kennet, took upon himself the work of Chaplain. He conducted family worship, catechised the servants—a task for Sunday afternoons—reprimanded the careless, and exhorted to secret prayer. All this was not carried through without inconvenience and petty reprisals. Perhaps the servants' opinion about the officious tutor had weight with the Lady herself. There is no doubt about the fact that she disliked him. Nevertheless he won the commendations of the Master of the House.

Generally regarded, the Kennet period became, in Boston's own way of putting it, "a thriving time for my soul."<sup>2</sup> These were days of intensified study

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

of the Word and of much prayer. Self-examination, to the extent of the preparation of a catalogue of sins chargeable to himself, indicated religious discipline beyond the ordinary. Then there were precious experiences of several "Bethels," times when God specially honours his servants with a heart-moving sense of His Presence and love. Such notably was Boston's in the orchard at Kennet, and there he did solemnly covenant with Heaven. This is the beginning of those personal Covenants that mark the grand dedications of his way.

Boston was wise enough to recognise that the experience of these days widened his outlook. He owns :—"It was by means of conversation there that I arrived at a degree of a public spirit I had not before."<sup>1</sup> Besides, he made particular progress towards his ministry : he learned something of the charge of souls ; he acquired address and prudent management ; and habituated himself to keeping the spiritual good of people constantly in view.

No less a part of this young man's wisdom was his repeated refusal to stand trials for licence by the Presbytery of Stirling and Dunblane. The Court had regard to local needs ; but Boston, true to himself, knew that he had to work on and wait. The tutorship of twelve months' duration ended on the twenty-second of February, 1697. Earlier in the same month, the Presbytery renewed its request for trials, and at the same time a similar intimation came from the distant Presbytery of Penpont, both of which show the pressing needs of these days of transition from Episcopacy to the Presbyterian Settlement.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs, Low's*, p. 31.

In after years, it pleased Thomas Boston to recall that his licence was given by his home Presbytery of Duns and Chirnside. This was the proposal made by Mr Alexander Colden, the Minister of Duns, who for personal interest and affection was Boston's true Parish Minister. The details of this procedure, typical of the methods of the period, are of interest. At the meeting in March, 1697, Mr Colden proposed the trials, and the Presbytery appointed a homily on James i. 5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." The acceptable delivery of this, which was taken in private at the April meeting, was followed by the appointment of the common head of doctrine, "*De Viribus Liberi Arbitrii Circa Bonum Spirituale*." The method of "handling" looked chiefly to Popish disputes. After his delivery of this, and his offering of a prayer, both of which were in Latin, the Presbytery at its same meeting in May appointed an exercise and addition on the text, Jude 15, "To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." In the exercise, the candidate had to show his skill in textual criticism; and by the addition, he was expected to arrive at the practical inference in the passage. The time given for the hearing of these was one hour. The above were delivered at what might be called a Presbytery Service, and were approved. There remained the popular sermon, on the text of St John i. 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace," a chronological discourse in Latin, examinations in Hebrew and Greek, with a test in

the Catechisms. The history dealt with in the discourse was exclusively Old Testament.

Thomas Boston became a probationer for the holy ministry on the fifteenth of June, 1697. "Thus all my trials being expedited," he writes, "I was that day licensed to preach the gospel . . . near about three years from my entering on the study of Divinity."<sup>1</sup> His genuineness speaks out here and marks that the alternative course for duration (and let it be said, for application) approximated to the regular one of three years.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 33.

### CHAPTER III

## THE PROBATIONER

“ These years brought in continued scenes of trial to me ; being generally acceptable to the people, but could never fall into the good graces of them who had the stroke in the settling of parishes.”  
(Memoirs, Low’s, p. 36.)

It must be admitted that the probationary period, which lasted for two years and three months, was a longish one under the circumstances. There were vacancies in the home district, where Boston resided for a time ; and in the place of his longer residence, the bounds of the Presbytery of Stirling. Boston’s difficulty was that, while he pleased the people, he could not commend himself to those who had the power in settlements. This refers chiefly to the Heritors. In 1690, legislation abolishing patronage vested the right of nomination in a vacancy in both Heritors and Elders. The Congregation could express approval, or disapproval with reasons to the Presbytery. Boston might have received a temporary charge, without inconvenience in the appointment at any rate, had he come, as he feared he might, within the purpose of the Assembly of 1698 to send twenty probationers to the Synod of Angus and Mearns. Later he was actually named by the Commission for appointment to Caithness.

One does not wish to condescend upon a probationer’s preaching, except to discern the strain. The text of the first sermon after licence, Psalm l. 22, “ Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver,” called

forth the Heritor's comment that the young railer was one of Henry Erskine's disciples. As to preaching, Boston's own intention is given thus :—" I began my preaching of the Word in a rousing strain ; and would fain have set fire to the devil's nest." <sup>1</sup> Timeously Mr John Dysart, the Minister of Coldingham, advised this beginner to concern himself with the preaching of Christ, which would be more pleasant. The same worthy monitor had methods of his own that called for comment ; for in his parish, where the majority of the people were Episcopalians, he carried pistols into his pulpit,<sup>2</sup> and laid them out ready during ministrations ! Again, Boston went an extreme way in affairs. For instance, the Parish of Foulden was practically his, and all that was required to put things through was Boston's personal visit to Lord William Ross of Hawkhead. The Brethren of the Presbytery, and specially Mr Colden, all urged it, but in vain. Boston was immovable in the position that these words indicate :—" I considered that I had done all that lay in my road in the matter, having preached several times in the Parish, which in the designed event was to have been my charge ; they were satisfied, and should have had their Christian right to choose their minister. I looked on the method proposed as an interpretative seeking of a call for myself, a symbolising with patronage, and below the dignity of the sacred character."<sup>3</sup> There was another proposal that he should be appointed to the Parish of Abbey St Bathans. This too miscarried, though not for the above reason. Boston

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> " Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ," vol. II., edition 1915, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, Low's, p. 39.

writes that St Bathans was the only parish he was ever really fond of : few Ministers get their dream-parish.

Removing to the bounds of the Presbytery of Stirling, our probationer widened his experience and modified his strain of preaching. Nevertheless, there remained sufficient of a rousing note to excite comment. While in that district he was particularly gratified to be invited to assist at the Culross Sacrament in July, 1698. On that auspicious occasion, he met Mr James Fraser of Brea and Mr George Mair, his Colleague. Both men came to mean much for Boston. Brea's record of suffering, his learning and piety, deeply impressed the young Minister. How much more would Mr James Fraser have become to him, had he read this entry, a long time set down in the Memoirs in the study of Culross Manse :—" I was much helped by Luther on Galatians, and Calvin's ' Institutions,' something more by that book called ' The Marrow of Modern Divinity ' ! " <sup>1</sup> In his own way the Colleague, a younger man, gave Boston considerable valued assistance. He helped him in his spiritual life, suggested he should begin keeping a diary of his religious experiences, and ultimately worked a further modification in the tone of his preaching. But a few difficult days had to pass for Boston, ere he wrote :—" I heard at Culross a week-day sermon, from Philippians iii. 8, by Mr Mair. . . . Upon the back of this, I sometimes thought I had preached but too little of Christ, which I would have been content to have reformed." <sup>2</sup> It was the denunciatory preacher that held forth for

<sup>1</sup> " Select Biographies," Wodrow Society, vol. II., p. 305.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 59.

two Sabbaths in Clackmannan Kirk, and concerning whose interest the Elders could not make headway in getting the Heritors to join in a call. If Boston really lost Clackmannan, as he supposed he did, by not bowing from the pulpit to Heritors at the close of the Service, or by refusing to join with them for a Sabbath evening's feast, such a person as himself was better without it. However, the true obstacle seems to have been the impetuosity of his pulpit manner. He indicates that his "railing and reflecting" <sup>1</sup> was much talked about, and that he was vexed at heart that his preaching was stormed against. An outspoken member of the Presbytery, referring at a meeting to the Fast of June, 1699, pointedly advised that the causes should be dealt with prudently, and mentioned plainly that some affected singularity in preaching.

Boston was further considered for the vacancy at Dollar. Here again his severe preaching made opponents. Some subscribed a paper and sent it to the Duke of Argyll, the Superior, signifying their decided opposition to the nominee. Another made his opinion public that "they were going to call a new upstart, and one that broke the thetes." <sup>2</sup> The timorous diplomacy of the Elders failed. On the Saturday evening one made an effort by working into his conversation something about St Paul's catching men with guile; and that some of the Heritors had said they would hear Boston again, before they agreed to his appointment; and that he "wished they might not be angered any more." <sup>3</sup> Even the last-minute word of another had no effect, which Boston's own note of the incident shows:—"As I was going

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.



down to the Kirk . . . he put me in mind to be sure to hold off from reflections, as far as I could ; for the which I reprimanded him.”<sup>1</sup>

With regard to this vehemence in early manner, one need not labour the point that in many instances it defeated its own purposes. On the other hand, it indicated an inward power, and a sense of the urgency of religious demands that is often lacking in the settled life of the Church. Many judicious Christians did testify to their having been helped by Boston's message. Many of the careless must have been moved and disciplined anew. Railing and reflecting can be much spoken against and be very much in place ; and the fact that this probationer did not look first to his chances of a parish, but to his duty as a preacher, could not but have weight with the discerning.

Interesting personal reflections on Boston's inward conflicts as to his duty in preaching are to be found in his “ Soliloquy on the Art of Man-fishing,” which was composed in 1699, and which will always have a place in the literature of Scottish probationers. In working out the requirements of following Christ, Boston sets down the rules of carnal wisdom ; and over against these, the rules of spiritual wisdom. The three principal paragraphs are given here in full :—

“ Carnal wisdom : Labour to get neat and fine expressions ; for these do very much commend a preaching to the learned ; and without these they think nothing of it. Spiritual wisdom : Christ sent them to preach the gospel not with wisdom of words. Go not to them with excellency of speech, or of

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 56.

wisdom. Let not thy speech and preaching be with the enticing words of man's wisdom. Carnal wisdom : Our people are new come out from under Prelacy, and they would not desire to have sins told particularly, and especially old sores to be ripped up. They cannot abide that doctrine. Other doctrine would take better with them. Hold off such things ; for it may well do them ill ; it will do them no good. Spiritual wisdom : Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious. Give them warning from me. If thou do it not they shall die in their sins, but their blood will I require at thy hand. What the Lord saith unto thee, that do thou speak. Carnal wisdom : Be but fair, specially to them that have the stroke in parishes, till you be settled in a parish to get stipend. If you will not do so, you may look for toiling up and down then ; for parishes will scare at you, and will not call you, and how will you live ? And so such a way of preaching will be to your loss, whereas otherwise it might be better with you. Spiritual wisdom : To have respect of persons is not good ; for, for a piece of bread that man will transgress. The will of the Lord be done. God hath determined your time, before appointed, and the bounds of your habitation.”<sup>1</sup>

Now as to the above. However one might complain that, on the one hand, ordinary prudence is lucidly stated, only to be ignored ; and that, on the other, passages of Scripture are too freely used out of their contexts, the fact remains that a high ideal was struggling for determination. A man is on

<sup>1</sup> Works, V., pp. 21, 22.

the right lines of ministry, when he sets spiritual wisdom over against carnal wisdom. A reference in the early Diary to a fast kept prior to a Communion<sup>1</sup> (a life-long personal and family custom with Boston) shows his genuine desire unto the realisation of a gracious personal religion : he desires Christ, without exception of any sin ; he desires union and communion, though there were no hell to punish those who are united to their sin ; he desires a whole Christ ; let Christ be given him, even if all else be taken away ; sin is a burden, especially besetting sin, and his whole endeavour is to seek after Christ. Surely the spirit of this inner discipleship was conveyed by presence and preaching, even to those who reacted in hostility to the manner of the man !

The probationary period concluded with a return, in May, 1699, to the bounds of the Presbytery of Duns, and the interval of waiting till the twenty-first of September, when Boston was ordained to the ministry of the Parish of Simprin. This was naturally a time of unsettlement, and following the experiences at Stirling might have been one of dejection. However, Boston readily undertook whatever Church work came to his hand. He assisted Mr Colden by "lecturing" on the Sundays, also by taking his week-day Services. He preached in several Churches throughout the district. At Coldingham he was troubled by the thought of his insufficiency for the work ; at Eccles he was concerned about the manner of his preaching ; at Stenton he experienced an alarming desertion before the Service, but through prayer, with many tears, "got above that deadness and reached to some confidence in the Lord in

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 43.

prayer.”<sup>1</sup> There were times, too, when preaching became a terror to him. All these show that Boston shared the difficulties every man has to encounter who essays what should be the trying path to the ministry. There were more things in Boston’s experience of that time than anxieties about personal health or over home difficulties. His test of quality lay in his wrestling on to a firm faith and a high spiritual standard in all things ; for he had realised “ the weight of the work of the ministry.”<sup>2</sup>

Eventually things took a definite line in his interest, and his appointment to Simprin was proposed by Messrs Colden and Dysart. Travelling in the matter, they discovered with satisfaction that Sir Archibald Cockburn of Langton, the sole Heritor, would make no difficulty about the same. The Presbytery of Chirnside (a separate Court after 1698) gave the appointment to preach, and on a Sabbath of July, 1699, Boston gave his first discourse in Simprin. The prospect of having but a very small congregation did not please him ; but he got over that. More disconcerting was the “ unbecoming carriage of the people, few as they were, partly by sleeping, and partly by going out.”<sup>3</sup> Yet enthusiasm triumphed, and the day concluded with the two Elders proposing his settlement.

Here was a call with its own problem. Personal consideration said : You must think of the rarity of the godly there and in the country ; a person of your powers and promise has simply got to consider the smallness of the charge ; in addition, the Presbyterian Fraternity, good and learned men though some of them be, are not agreeable to you !

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Turning from some things herein, which look like a young man's lapse into spiritual pride, one is impressed with Boston's solemn addressing of himself to the work of the ministry. Essential to this was his renewal of his personal covenant at this time, and which he signed as in the presence of God. Two interesting passages taken from it are as follows :—  
“ I, Mr Thomas Boston, preacher of the gospel of Christ . . . being called to undertake the great and weighty work of the ministry of the gospel, for which I am altogether insufficient, I do by this declare, That I stand to and own all my former engagements, whether sacramental, or any other way whatsoever ; and now again do renew my covenant with God ; and hereby, at this present time, do solemnly covenant and engage to be the Lord's and make a solemn resignation and upgiving of myself, my soul, body, spiritual and temporal concerns, unto the Lord Jesus Christ, without any reservation whatsoever ; and do hereby give my voluntary consent to the terms of the covenant laid down in the Holy Scriptures, the word of truth ; and with my heart and soul I take and receive Christ in all his offices . . . and hereby engage to cleave to Christ as my Sovereign Lord and King, in life and in death, in prosperity and in adversity, even for ever, and to strive and wrestle in His strength against all known sin. . . . And this solemn covenant I make as in the presence of the ever-living, heart-searching God, and subscribe it with my hand, in my chamber, at Duns, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the fourteenth day of August, one thousand six hundred and ninety-nine years.”<sup>1</sup> This was the real preparation for Simprin.

<sup>1</sup> Works, II, pp. 671, 672.

The formal steps are easily told. The Presbytery prescribed these for trials : an exegesis, "De Idololatria," an exercise and addition on Ephesians i. 5, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," and the usual popular sermon—all of which were duly sustained. The Presbytery itself, however, managed ill ; for the candidate was allowed to overhear censures. Either that, or a feeling of spiritual separation, caused Boston to write about the social side of that important day :—"At the dinner I was much discouraged, and was inclined to wish in my heart I might not be settled in that country." <sup>1</sup>

Thursday, the twenty-first of September, 1699, brought Thomas Boston's great day of ordination. Mr John Pow, Minister at Lennel, (Coldstream), preached on Acts xx. 24, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." A more appropriate text could not have been chosen. This said all that had been and all that was to be in that singularly sensitive and exercised life that had been set apart. Boston is careful to record that to the questions that were put he returned answers at some length.<sup>2</sup> Although Langton did not attend to give the new Minister a personal welcome, he ordered "decent entertainment" to be prepared for the Presbytery.

The Memoirs conclude this period of the life with a prayer that is a gracious recognition, such as

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

only an observer of providences could give. It is to the effect that all the dispensations had been wonderful ; he had been inured to hardness by opposition ; desires for other places had been frustrated and he had been led to the place appointed ; and therefore his present ministry would be entered upon with confidence of divine support. Veritably this betokened the ordination of the inner life, without which all else is merely formal.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MINISTRY AT SIMPRIN

“ Simprin ! O blessed be He for His kindness at Simprin.”  
(Memoirs, p. 128.)

THE incumbency of Mr Thomas Boston, the eleventh Minister of Simprin, (or Simprim), lasted from September, 1699, to April, 1707. Four others followed in the charge, then it was united to Swinton in 1761. The Parish was small, composed entirely of agricultural workers, and afforded the Minister the experience of looking after but one class of parishioner. The Church was a simple, oblong structure, dedicated by Bishop David de Bernham in 1247, to serve this vicarage from Kelso Abbey. One can be assured that the Revolution Settlement Minister had little appreciation of the venerableness of the building which he was honoured to possess. Again, if the Church were in good repair, this was primarily due to its own good quality of structure, rather than to any attention that it might receive in the changeful days of the struggle between Episcopacy and Presbytery. But there was no doubt about the state of the Manse ! It was a ruin. Boston had to find a home in a neighbouring cottage that was empty and wait for over two years, till his new home was something like complete. Even after that long time, unforeseen circumstances, due to the transference of Langton's estate, caused the Minister both trouble and expense to secure completion. He had



to build a boundary wall and set out the Manse garden at his own costs.

As to emolument, the locality of stipend showed no more than 46 bolls of bear, 30 of oats, an allowance for communion elements of eighteen pounds Scots, with additional money stipend from Horntown, or Horndean, twenty-six pounds Scots.

Among first things, this social factor must be noticed also, that the Minister had the countenance and support of rank in the person of Lady Morison of Kersfield, whose mansion was situated a mile from Simprin. This proved both a helpful friendship and an honourable recognition of a Minister of the National Church.

Mention of the difficult conditions at Simprin commends the affection and courage of the Lady of the Manse who went there to share Boston's lot. She was Katherine Brown, from Barhill, Ferrytown, Clackmannan, the daughter of a surgeon. The marriage took place at her home on the seventeenth of July, 1700, and was conducted by Mr George Mair. Mrs Boston was content to take up house in the makeshift place that had to be used as the Manse for so long, and then to face up to the inconveniences of the partly finished Manse of the Parish. A wright coming in during winter months, and the using of rooms earth-floored and for the time being covered with shavings, must have tried her domestic patience. This woman wrought many mercies. She was the daughter and friend in old age to John Boston, the Minister's father, a widower and resident at the Manse. As to her other works and graces, Boston writes :—" A woman of great worth, whom I therefore passionately loved, and inwardly honoured ;

truly pious and fearing the Lord ; modest and grave in her deportment, but naturally cheerful ; a pattern of frugality, and wise management of household-affairs ; well fitted for, and careful of, the virtuous education of her children ; remarkably useful to the countryside through her skill in physic and surgery, which in many instances a peculiar blessing appeared to be commanded upon from heaven ; and, finally, a crown to me in my public station and appearances.”<sup>1</sup>

The programme of work that Boston planned and sustained showed that his zeal could be practical. No longer a probationer and detached, he was part of the life of a community and could influence as the accepted Minister. His Sabbath Services were Morning and Afternoon, the regular arrangement, and an extra diet of worship in the evening. The Minister’s part of the Morning Service began with “ prefacing,” an occasional custom which Boston made much of and continued all his ministry. To “ preface ” was to indicate briefly the general direction the interest of the Service would take. Of course, this passed from usage, but it must have been found of value in the days when unlettered audiences liked things to be made out very plainly. Then, at every Morning Service there was a “ lecture,” or exposition of a chapter of Scripture. This provided a solid textual knowledge for the religion of the time, and thus was of supreme value. Boston’s “ lectures ” were chosen mostly from the New Testament. The time allotted was half an hour, approximately the time given also to the morning discourse. This was always a “ law-sermon,” *i.e.*, one that dealt with a topic of Christian ethics. The Afternoon Service differed in being

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 157.

without a "lecture," and having, as a general rule, a gospel sermon.

Boston's specially arranged Evening Services were for instruction. He dealt with the doctrines of the Church, as they are set out by the Shorter Catechism, and, in his first method, gave a regular talk about each. He was careful to use many similitudes to help out the handling of abstract themes, till the discovery that only the illustrations were remembered caused him to change his teaching method. In the outcome, this Service became a regular diet of catechising, and such a gathering in the Church could not have been without its moments of intense interest.

On the Thursday there was a Fellowship Meeting in the Minister's home. This was along the line of, and may have been run in a kind of opposition to the similar and independent meetings common at the time. This Thursday arrangement was continued throughout the Simprin ministry, and was varied only by a week-day Service in Church for the summer. To write the absence of a Sunday School is perhaps the best way of calling attention to the fact that a successor of Boston's, Mr James Landreth, 1725-1757, held in obscure Simprin one of Scotland's earliest Sunday Schools. These generous arrangements made by Boston, and prompted no doubt by the Minister's zeal for service, met the decided needs of the Parish. It is a pity that they were viewed with disfavour by some of the neighbouring clergy, a fact that Boston was painfully made aware of, even on the occasion of his making social calls.

The visitation of a small congregation, settled within narrow bounds, became our conscientious Minister's opportunity of intensive spiritual work.

In the eighteenth century, ministerial visits were never merely social attentions, and under Boston's direction were less likely to be so. In his mind was the thought that he had enough to do with his handful ; for the discovery he had made of their ignorance of God and themselves made him the more satisfied with the smallness of his charge. Thus, surely, pastoral visits were set to the pitch of efficiency, when the Minister talked of the Sabbath discourses, and applied them to family conditions ; urged the need of Christ, a Saviour from the power of our natural state of sinfulness ; exhorted to the duty and opportunity of secret prayer, also, of family worship ; dealt with what he called " relative duties " and offered prayers for the household. Working in an age when these things have passed in the main from the usage of the National Church, one feels that an effective means of grace has been lost. A great effort would be required to recover this, and those who have never wholly dispensed with it would certainly urge its importance for Scottish religious life.

In the grand opportunity he had of comparative leisure, Boston did not fail to cultivate the inner life. A ministry is spiritually vital, as it is one complete expression in private and public life. In an age when the best men of the Church were establishing it in the life of the people by a service of piety, Boston reached to a pre-eminent place ; though he would never for a moment have thought of it like that. Central to his private life was regular secret prayer. Indeed, all his devotional life, so far from being fitful, came under rule, as is borne out by his recurring references to his ordinary practice.<sup>1</sup> Simprin saw

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 107 ; and *Memoirs*, Low's, pp. 129 and 143.

the commencement of these disciplines. The day began with secret prayer, of thanksgiving, confession and special petition, and a reading of the secret "ordinary" of Scripture, where passages applicable to his case were marked in the margins. At morning family worship a psalm was sung, an Old Testament passage read and prayers offered. Boston was a lover of the Psalms. His frequent quotations, chiefly in the *Memoirs*, show that he found them to be the poetry of spiritual life. Evening worship was similar, except that New Testament Scripture was read and an exposition added. A time of secret prayer concluded the day. In addition to this unalterable arrangement for devotions, proper prayers were offered before Services for furtherance, and after Service in thanksgiving and to obtain a blessing on the work. There were prayers for the suitable choice of a text, prayers when he was "difficulted" over it. Even application was not sufficient. . . . "I was fastened to my studies till the evening, mixing them with prayer."<sup>1</sup> There were prayers out of sudden moods and incidents he called "ejaculatory prayers," petitions on the ordinary events of life, and extraordinary prayer that is the keeper of a man's conscience in crisis. The forenoons of Mondays were all along devoted to prayer and self-examination. There are not extant any written prayers by Boston. This is a loss ; for, though he proceeded in the extempore manner, the sentences would fittingly express the sublimity of his inner life. It must be allowed that, for a man of his quality, prayer could be extempore. Out of his intense and habitual devotion there would be conveyed in public the attainment of his gracious

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 125.

spirit. There is no need to date the following paragraph for any year of his ministry, and no need to doubt its personal applicability :—" Pray evening and morning and at all convenient seasons. Be always in a praying frame, and be devout and lively in all your applications to the throne of grace. Omit no season of it, not even amidst your daily employments ; for even then you may send forth pious thoughts towards Heaven, and maintain communion with God, while you are engaged in your daily labours : Pray without ceasing." <sup>1</sup>

Arising out of all this, and taking form from the usage of the times, were the customs of holding personal and family fasts. Just as National Covenants gave the suggestion of personal covenants, so National Fasts prompted individual ones.

As to personal fasts, they were regarded as extraordinary duties, enjoined by Providence at special seasons. Causes might be general, as well as particular :—" The case of the Church, the case of a neighbour, and one's own private case, may each of them separately, and much more all of them conjunctly, found a providential call to personal fasting and humiliation." <sup>2</sup> The directions to be followed were : to choose a fit time and place beforehand ; to make a preparation the night previous by suitable reflections and abstinence from all that would " dis-fit " for it ; to rise and be prepared at a specially early hour ; to exclude worldly thoughts and fill the mind with holy thoughts ; and to see that the ordinary duties of prayer and reading were done. There had to follow a solemn review of one's sins and of public sins that came within the purpose of the humiliation.

<sup>1</sup> Works, II., p. 539.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XI., p. 352.

Thereafter, confession of both had to be made. Then there was the duty of personal covenanting "by taking hold of God's Covenant of Grace in express words."<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the fast was reached by the act of making the requests purposed. The duty concluded with humble confession of the insufficiency of the work itself, and with prayer.

Family fasts were similar to personal ones. Boston first learned this part of family worship in the household of Mr George Mair, Minister of Culross. Being deeply impressed with it, he adopted it for use all along. The special directions were : that the head of the house the night before should give notice of the fast and mention the causes ; that on the morning of the fast the members of the family abstain from food and prepare themselves spiritually by confession, covenanting and prayer ; assembled, they hear the causes, receive exhortations and join in the exercise of family worship. The principal action of the fast now takes place by the mistress and members of the family taking part in prayer and making requests, all of which are gathered up in the final prayer made by the head of the house.

Such was Boston's custom unvaryingly. To him a Christian family was a house-church, so that the solemnity of these occasions was in keeping. He regarded this as a duty enjoined by the Word of God and called forth by the divine will in events. In his sermons he commended it as a means of grace, and again and again lamented that it was not taken up. To the members of his household these occasions must have left a unique memory. For others, one

<sup>1</sup> Works, XI., p. 373.

can only say that, exceptional as the arrangement is, it stands as an achievement of pious family life in Scotland, and out of its thoroughness and intensity, as does his practice of personal fasting, calls for the rebuilding of the family altar in our Homeland.

Systematic study, the essential of an efficient ministry, had a large place in Boston's life. However, this must be understood to have been intensive, rather than extensive. The Latin of the Grammar-school became to him vocabulary, a discipline in form, an occasional instrument for a limited reading of classics, the language of lectures and text-books, and of a few personal letters ; but never the vehicle of a wide classical culture. His studies in Greek, confined entirely to the New Testament, would equip for exegetical work only. At the beginning of the Simprin days, his interest must have turned to the philosophic disciplines of the Arts Course, so that he read over "Carte's Meditations." Wherefrom what is certainly a very personal comment proceeds :— "After reading . . . I saw much of book-vanity, and found myself more disposed to seek and long for Christ's teaching by His Spirit." <sup>1</sup>

Now, here is the direction-mark to the historic and present world of thought in which this man of exceptional powers found his place. His mind reviewed the chronological periods, from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, through the period of types and ceremonies to Christ. From His day there was evangelical progression, till humanity fell into the error of Antichrist. Only when the Reformation Leaders appeared was the good way won again. This is but part of the truth of history.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 130.



All attainment comes by a narrow way which is never a single track. It was probably because Boston, like his contemporaries in the Revolution Church, set himself to do one thing in life that he saw only one thing in history.

Furthermore, his view of the Scottish religious past was in like fixed focus. Never once do his voluminous writings hint that there were such personages as Columba, or Ninian, or Kentigern, or Cuthbert. The organisation and labours of the Mediæval Church were a blank. He regarded the Reformation as having given all that was of value to the soul of Scotland. Herein, too, he is particular. Neither Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, nor John Knox are ever commended in public discourses as heroes of the Church. The very Covenanters themselves pass nameless for him. Only the work, wholly set apart from human instrumentality and set towards the evangelical purposes of the Divine, receives worthy reference.

Equipped with a sound logical method, developed in the Arts Course, and applying it to the Divinity studied in the Hall, Boston, within the limits of his concentrated interest, attempted to solve his spiritual problems. He had few books. The reading of such as he did possess or borrowed is matter for memoranda. The “*Œconomia Fœderum*” of Witzius, copious and balanced in treatment, is a prominent example. The arrival of a parcel of books was an event; and the particular interest of the man is indicated by the volumes: Zanchy’s Works, Luther’s commentary on “Galatians,” and Beza’s “Confession of Faith.” Yet at most Boston had to regret his small stock of books. The sight of his tiny book-press

once caused a brother Minister to smile, a thoughtless action which cut Boston to the heart. There were times when he bravely counted self-reliance and resource in study as gains to match against his want of text-books ; there were other occasions, and these increasing with the years, when he was content to become a man of one book, or more truly, of one great religious literature. It has to be noted that not always with free usage could he handle the Sacred Volume that had to yield the proofs of a fixed covenant theology. Yet, with this one qualification, it is true that the Bible provided him with religious word, idiom and instance, and spoke naturally to his inner life. Some men, mighty in Scripture, like Halyburton of the Memoirs, are encumbered in pious expression under a dire weight of biblical sentences. Not so Thomas Boston, who made Scripture his own ready speech.

As to preparation for the pulpit, the Memoirs have interesting details. Boston's method was to compose his two sermons on the Friday. These discourses were not written to an outline previously drawn up, but right off as the thoughts came to his running pen. Sermons were "mandated" and "lectures" prepared on the Saturday evening. Sermon notes, taken from the complete manuscripts, were reviewed on the Sabbath morning and pulpit delivery made with the help of these. Boston claimed he had a gift of ready utterance, and in support of this he wisely followed out the life-long habit of composition. Curate Calder's pages in "Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed" reflected nothing of his manner, though he was not free from fault by any means. As to length of sermon, it is a mistake to

think that the discourses of the period were inordinately long. Special ones may have been ; but ordinarily the "lecture" and sermon lasted half an hour each.

The conventional method of setting out a discourse, and from which Boston never varied, will be seen in his homily on St John i. 12. The title is "Of Faith in Jesus Christ,"<sup>1</sup> and the sermon proceeds :—"Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel. . . . Here we will consider, I. How faith in Christ is a saving grace ; II. Whence it proceeds ; III. The subject of faith ; IV. The object of it ; V. The saving and justifying acts of it ; VI. The end of these acts of faith ; VII. The ground and warrant of it ; VIII. Lastly, draw an inference or two. The topic was always improved for instruction, dehortation, or exhortation. Sometimes this was extended along a line of paragraphs, each headed with an adverb. What had been exhorted had to be done understandingly, reverently, humbly, feelingly, believably, sincerely, fervently, watchfully, perseveringly and dependently. Divisions and sub-divisions were set down to carry the detail, and the result in many cases presented formidable complexities. In scorn, Graham of the "Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century" calls them "hydra-headed discourses."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it must be remembered that their authors, and Boston is no exception, could put together smooth and finished compositions for

<sup>1</sup> Works, II., p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> "The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century," H. G. Graham, p. 294.

exercise and addition at the Presbytery, or for Sacramental occasions. The ordinary sermons were really adaptations to the interest of congregations. Detailed and elaborated they would achieve their good purpose. As at the Reformation, the Revolution Church had to give a teaching service to Scotland. The particular form used provided a strong framework for the substance of the Faith.

Next, the meaning of the common phrase, "ordinary in preaching," or simply "ordinary," will be readily understood from Boston's systematic choice of pulpit subjects.<sup>1</sup> These were as follows : from the second Sabbath of his ministry till August, 1700, he dealt with "Man's Natural State" ; thence till October, 1701, the topic was "Christ, the Remedy for Man's Misery" ; following this up in discourses to February, 1702, there was "The Application of the Remedy" ; till November of the same year he considered "Particulars of the Ordinary Methods with Sinners in Conversion" ; on to February, 1703, the theme was "The Privilege of Believers in Christ" ; and the conclusion of the "ordinary" from February to April, 1703-1704, insisted on "The Believer's Duty." This last embraced general doctrine, the meaning and application of the Commandments, the use of the law for those outside Christ, the believer's deliverance and freedom from the law, as a Covenant of Works, and the law as a rule of life to believers. An "ordinary" for week-day sermons dealt with The Song of Solomon.

All this meant diligent preparation by the Minister, and capable attention on the part of the people. What certainly did equip them was the regular

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, pp. 167, 168.

catechising of home and school and of ministerial diets. So thorough was this method that the average parishioner must have known his definitions and had a ready sense of the scope of religious topics.

It has to be added that pulpit "ordinaries" were subject to interruptions. Place had to be given to topical sermons on the many causes of fasts, national and parochial; for sermons preparatory to Communion, or following from it; for discourses on calamities such as storms, droughts, plagues (the ague), or the outbreaking of heinous sins. All this meant that the services of the pulpit were not unrelated.

An active and exact mind, like Boston's, was bound to come upon its problems. These are indicated very clearly in the Memoirs. It was his method that difficulties should be put down on paper and reflections thereon written out extensively: hence the set of "Miscellaneous Questions."<sup>1</sup>

The Ministers of the Revolution Establishment preached the doctrine, and nothing but the doctrine of the Confessions and Catechisms. Their position was that on authoritative Scriptures authoritative Standards had been set up. Practical safeguards were the frequent and explicit injunctions of the General Assembly, the vigilance of the Committee on Purity of Doctrine, and, indeed, the urgent practical service required by the times. Certainly the accepted view of moral history was profound: the fearful fact of sin and consequent depravity, man's inability under law, the absolute need of divine intervention in the work of salvation, and the glorious achievement of Christ.

<sup>1</sup> Works, VI., pp. 1-220.

Further, in working out the practical lines of the Confession, the Westminster Divines declared what would guard essentials. For instance, they made it plain that believers must repent of their sins and stressed the duty of repentance ; they kept justification to its proof and practical outcome in conduct, without isolating it and making it carry over much ; again, they gave repentance an initial place in theory, as it has in Scripture and experience.

Boston dealt with the problem of the place of sin in the believer. How did its liability to punishment affect the assurance that appertained to the state of grace ? While considering this matter, he discovered in a cottage in Simprin Edward Fisher's " Marrow of Modern Divinity." (Part I. was published in 1645, Part II. was added in 1648. The volume seems to have been brought to the Parish by a soldier returning from the Cromwellian wars.) Its purpose was to find an evangelical way as against Legalism and Antinomianism, and thus, as Boston pleasantly owns, " came close to the points I was in quest of, and to show the consistency of these which I could not reconcile before ; so that I rejoiced in it as a light which the Lord had seasonably struck up to me in my darkness." <sup>1</sup> Thus provided, he goes on to elucidate these points : I. Whether or not the sins of believers, while unrepented of, make them liable to eternal punishment ? ; II. Whether or not all sins, past, present and to come, are pardoned together and at once ? ; III. Whether or not repentance be necessary to the obtaining of pardon for sin ?

With regard to question I., this is Boston's own problem. The Confession of Faith gives findings :

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 169.

that, though true believers can never ultimately fall from grace, they must constantly renew their repentance ; and that the stress should be rather on the need of diligence therein than on the fact of acceptance. Boston inclines here to find for assurance. This was due to the influence of the " Marrow," chapter II., section 3, which discusses the believer's relation to the law of the Covenant of Works. The trend of the " Marrow " chapter is to over-assert the believer's freedom from law :—" God cannot, by virtue of the Covenant of Works, either require of you any obedience, or punish you for any disobedience, no, He cannot by virtue of that Covenant, so much as threaten you, or give you an angry word ; for indeed He can see no sin in you, as a transgression of that Covenant. . . . God never threatens eternal death, after He has given to a man eternal life.<sup>1</sup> . . . Wherefore I will be bold to bid Moses with his Tables, and all lawyers with their books, and all men with their works, hold their peace and give place : so that I say unto thee, O law ! be gone. And, if it will not be gone, then thrust it out by force, says Luther."<sup>2</sup> In point of justification, then, the believer is entirely freed from the law that condemns to eternal punishment. The Fatherly chastisements, consequent on a believer's sin, are not passed over ; but the contention is for increased assurance as to state. Thus the emphasis, and isolation, that Luther had to make on this doctrine for the needs of his day were again conveyed by the " Marrow."

As to question II., this is the " Marrow's " own extreme statement, and shows how alien the spirit of that composition is to the practical good sense of

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 295, 296.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

the Standards. Justification, itself a guarantee of goodwill unto the work of righteousness, cannot be made a doctrine of absolute assurance in such terms. This is almost an Indulgence ! Particularly, the question shows the influence the “ Marrow ” had over Boston’s mind, and the set of his interest towards assurance.

As to question III., Boston’s interest here is to emphasise that faith is the alone instrument of justification. There is a repentance necessary in believers for obtaining the removal of temporary strokes ; but no such qualification can be predicated of the unbelieving state anterior to faith. This single act of faith begins the life of faith, secures absolute justification, and has for consequent, evangelical repentance, *i.e.*, a mourning for, and forsaking of, sin out of a loving regard to the will of God. This is not for faith, but from faith ; not for life, but from life. The total effect is to simplify the saving act by almost isolating it, and to belittle what was described as “ legal repentance,” itself the very moving of the divine life towards the act of faith. So much for the three questions.

With regard to the extent of the gospel offer, the “ Marrow ” influenced him markedly. Boston never departed from the position, and never ceased to declare that the gospel would be effectual only to the elect ; yet he could not get away from such a passage as this :—“ God the Father, as He is in His Son, Jesus Christ, moved with nothing but with His free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all, that whosoever of them all shall believe in this, His Son, shall not perish, but have eternal life. And hence it was that Jesus Christ



Himself said unto His disciples, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven." That is, go and tell every man without exception that here is good news for him ! Christ is dead for him ! and, if he will take Him and accept of His righteousness, he shall have Him." <sup>1</sup> This gift and grant to mankind sinners became for Boston the ground of the universal offer. Its declaration was God's undoubted commission to His ambassadors. It asserted the individual's right of acceptance under the general gift, though it was a fact reserved in his mind that effectual grace would only be given to the elect.

In the above, one finds a definite direction that wins sympathy. Particular election should always be an after-truth to the widest possible ministry of the Word, and a topic of the very rarest pulpit reference.

If it be admitted that the Confession and the Catechisms give the doctrine too prominent a place, and that that was reflected in the preaching of the times, then this early reset of emphasis, on the part of Boston, was a real service to Scottish preaching. Of course, it was purely directional. There were difficulties : and these remain. Yet one would rather take place here than with those who made an alignment of the gospel offer only to the elect.

It goes almost without saying that "The Marrow of Modern Divinity" set its mark upon Boston's preaching at the time of the Simprin ministry. He indicates that there was a certain "tincture" which was observed.

The account of the ministry will be concluded with a few unconnected paragraphs.

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 262, 263.

## FAMILY LIFE

On the twenty-first of May, 1701, Katherine, the first child, was born. She had a defective upper-lip, was weakly, so that it was thought best to baptise her on the day of her birth. About the harvest time, the parents, who were absent on a business errand and staying at Inzevair in the Parish of Torryburn, had a singular experience with regard to that child. Mrs Boston had a dream and in it saw her perfectly restored and wondrous beautiful. By this such an impression was made on the Minister and his wife that they returned home with all haste. When about eight miles from their destination they received word that the child had died. Boston's own pathetic and uncanny account will tell the rest :—" We came home in great heaviness, and found that that very day and hour of the day, as near as could be judged, wherein my wife had the dream aforesaid, the child had died." <sup>1</sup>

Of the five children born at Simprin, two survived : John Boston, who was destined for the ministry of the Church and refused it, becoming Chamberlain to the Duke of Buccleuch ; and Jane Boston who married James Russell of the family of Ashestiel.

John Boston, the Minister's father, died in his son's Manse. He lies in what is now an unmarked grave in Simprin Churchyard ; but his memorial is in his son's famous Memoirs :—" He was active and given to application in business ; one who in the worst of times retained his integrity beyond many, and in view of death gave comfortable evidences of

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 161.

eternal life to be obtained through the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

### COMMUNION

The people of Simprin had to wait till the second day of August, 1702, for their Sacrament. Assuredly, Boston by this long preparatory “fenced” the Tables. During the rest of the ministry there was a yearly dispensing and an additional winter Sacrament. The arrangements for Services would follow the usual order: Fast-day Services on the Thursday, Services in immediate preparation on the Saturday when tokens were distributed to strangers, the Table Services and Churchyard preachings on the Lord’s Day, and concluding Monday Services at one of which the Parish Minister made his “pirlicue” or summing up of the messages of the Sacramental season. Boston records that he had a “savoury remembrance”<sup>2</sup> of his delivering his first action-sermon; and that this first Sacrament was the only one of the summer celebrations, at which the dispensing was done in the Kirk.

With regard to the practice of having assistants, he writes at some length:—“I never had a gust for gathering together many ministers at Communion; though . . . I continued to call two or three in the summer and had two sermons on the Saturdays and Mondays. Soon after my ordination, I got a great disgust of the Mondays’ dinners, perceiving what snares they were, not only to the families of the respective ministers, but to the guests also. And by this course I was free of both these, providing a moderate entertainment for my few assistants.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 159.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

The innovation of arranging for a winter Sacrament, the first being in January, 1705, did not pass without remark. Reports were put round the district that the celebration was to be exclusive to the people of the Parish, this being a variation of the Minister's intimation that it had been arranged specially for them. Further, a domestic tragedy made the Sacrament time its own date too ; for on the Saturday the Minister buried his child Robert. Boston came through all his afflictions. He could be thankful for the repetition of a "soul-strengthening ordinance" <sup>1</sup> and for the fact that so many faithful people of the surrounding district were present.

On yet another winter Sacrament the prospect was forbidding. The daughter Jane was ill. He fears to proceed. "It will be thought testified against me by the Lord," he writes, "and it will be said that what man could not hinder me to do, God would ; and so my design will be broken, and I broken by it." Then the thought came :—"It is my duty, I will venture ; let the Lord do what seemeth Him good." <sup>2</sup> All passed off well, and the sensitive, if over-apprehensive observer of providences had his reward.

The assistance received for Sacraments had to be returned. On this point Boston mentions that he was frequently absent from his charge for three Sabbaths together. His plea is that he assisted only when there was need, so that he did not go out of his way to attend these Sacramental conventicles. When he could be at a Morning Service away, and return for one of his Parish Services, he always did so. Of the spiritual value of these occasions he makes

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

no doubt :—" Now by means of my going so much abroad to Sacraments, and having that ordinance twice a year at home, I had frequent occasion of converse with persons exercised about their own spiritual case ; the which was a great help to me in preaching." <sup>1</sup>

#### MEMBERSHIP OF THE PRESBYTERY OF CHIRNSIDE

One incident from a Presbytery meeting of the year 1704 has value for present interests. A young man, offering his finding on a doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, mentioned that in some ways the Covenant was conditional. Boston, who disliked the thought of a condition being attached to the Covenant, " quarrelled " the statement. The candidate, therefore, was obliged to take up an exegesis on the question, " *An Fœdus Gratiæ sit Conditionatum ?* " At a further meeting of the Court, Boston impugned his thesis that faith was the only condition. The point of the objection was that condition should be dissociated from an absolute Covenant, and that describing even faith itself as a condition seemed to allow for the incidence of qualification or merit. Here again " Marrow " influence is traceable. The incident was closed with an explanation. Boston's note on the matter is that it was a pity " such an improper way of speaking of faith should be used ; since it was not scriptural, was liable to be abused, and ready to lead people into mistakes." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Low's, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 171.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SYNOD OF MERSE  
AND TEVIOTDALE

For all Boston's aversion to worldly business and his exclusive preoccupation with spiritual matters, when put to it, he could be a dependable man of affairs. So thought Mr James Ramsay, the Minister of Eyemouth, when he moved for the appointment of his friend to the Synod Clerkship : and this turned out successfully. Boston declined the oath "*de fideli administratione*"—this was the unbusinesslike part of him ; and gave competent attention to the work of the appointment—this was the business part of him that had acquired skill in the Notary's office at Duns. He held the post from 1702 to 1711.

The Synod meetings of those days must have carried through agenda of anything but formal matters, since a man of Boston's parts had to write a personal note like this :—" I often sat in my seat among them, as one wandering in a wilderness, while I observed the sway of their opinions and reasonings, in order to take up the mind of the Court ; . . . I ordinarily took up and expressed their affairs so as to please and to facilitate their work."<sup>1</sup> For the three days' sederunts of ordinary meetings and an occasional Synod "*pro re nata*," the Clerk's fees were fourteen pence sterling, per Minister of the Synod of seventy congregations. Thus Boston received annually about eight pounds sterling. He adds that the fees were well paid.

In connection with this work for the Synod, it is pleasing to record that Lord Minto paid Boston a very high compliment to his efficiency.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, pp. 161, 162.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Membership of the Assembly of March, 1703, the first in Queen Anne's reign, made Boston an eye-witness of one of the significant scenes of those days. In the preceding reign there had been difficulties between the King and the Assembly as to ecclesiastical policy, and arising therefrom unwarranted royal interference with the arrangements for the meeting of the Supreme Court. An Assembly had been adjourned without a day having been named for its next meeting ; or a day appointed had been untimely cancelled. Ministers had been allowed to make journeys from distant parishes to find that their efforts were lost and that they had to return home without keeping General Assembly. This was a public spectacle, which the dissenters did not neglect to the strengthening of their charge of Erastianism, as part of their contentings against the Establishment. To assert the intrinsic power of the Church seemed to some of the Ministers the proper course to take against that ; but it was not accomplished. All that could be obtained was a " Seasonable Admonition " which declared :—" We do believe and own that Jesus Christ is the only Head and King of His Church, and that He hath instituted in His Church officers and ordinances, order and government, and not left it to the will of man, magistrate, or Church, to alter at their pleasure. And we believe that this government is neither Prelatical nor Congregational, but Presbyterian, which now, through the mercy of God, is established among us ; and we believe we have a better foundation for this our Church government than the inclinations of the people or the laws of

men.”<sup>1</sup> Boston’s Assembly of 1703 seems to have moved further for the asserting of this intrinsic power. To the Queen’s letter, giving assurance of her willingness to protect their form of government, the Church replied in terms of undoubted loyalty to the Throne, and asserted that Presbytery was the form agreeable to the Word of God. Boston tells that amid their deliberations the Assembly considered an overture, the terms of which sought to prohibit the marriages of Protestants with Papists. He mentions also that there was “a whisper beginning about the Throne”<sup>2</sup> in this connection, and that, when the overture was about to be accepted, the Queen’s Commissioner, the Earl of Seafield, abruptly announced from the Throne Gallery that the Assembly was dissolved. Mr George Meldrum, the Moderator, submitted and closed the sederunt. Boston’s able description gives this tense scene :—“This having come like a thunder-clap, there were from all corners of the House protestations offered against it ; and for the intrinsic power of the Church, with which I joined. But the Moderator, otherwise a most grave and composed man, being in as much confusion as a school-boy when beaten, closed with prayer and got away together with the Clerk, so that nothing was then got marked. This was one of the heaviest days I ever saw, beholding a vain man trampling on the privilege of Christ’s House, and others crouching under the burden.”<sup>3</sup> This incident brought about the long-time compromise in the manner of closing the Assembly ; first by the Moderator, and then by the Commissioner in the name of the Sovereign.

<sup>1</sup> “The Church History of Scotland,” J. Cunningham, vol. II., p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 164.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.



## GENERAL EVENTS AND THE SIMPRIN MINISTRY

The Memoirs and sermons make fewest possible references to general events. Even the Darien disaster is only touched upon as a lesson for one to check over-sensitiveness as to personal trials. Boston, and indeed few of his co-religionists, could see the new direction of the national effort that would make its way past the disaster and win economic wealth and power for Scotland. "The Age of Secular Interests" thus begun could not be dismissed as worldly and of no account; for it served both the amenities of coming days and the greater equipment of the National Church. The best part of this was a widening of interests, themselves the beginning of missionary efforts. Boston never once preached missions, and spoke of the heathen only in connection with some doctrine. The day waited yet awhile, in which the Church spoke of the heathen with the purpose of discharging a duty to them.

So far from having to do with other nations, men like Boston made "Samaritans" of their neighbours. They hated the Union. Boston declared he had been against it all along; and there is not one word of approval in his writings for even some commendable aspect of it; and surely prejudice could not contrive to see it all corrupt! Perhaps, when he looked at England, he saw but the Church of England. To him it was "the rotten Church of England."<sup>1</sup> Rome was the master and it the scholar.<sup>2</sup> One ought to hold in abhorrence its superstitions and ceremonies. It had corrupted simple gospel institutions:—"To baptise with water is Christ's command: but who

<sup>1</sup> Works, III., p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II., p. 155, note.

has added the sign of the cross ? Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Supper : but who has added kneeling to overturn the table-gesture which we have from Christ's own example ? The Lord's Day is of divine institution : but whose are the numerous holidays observed in the Church of England ? ” <sup>1</sup> Then there are disparaging references to book-prayers and to the prelate as an officer whom Christ never appointed. <sup>2</sup>

Quite another side to this attitude is the fact that this strict Presbyterian would never have become an extreme one and wish to impose the acceptance of the Scottish order of Church government on the neighbouring nation. The day of the Solemn League and Covenant was past. Anything in its direction was simply a pious wish. For policy, he was content to maintain the differences : against the Episcopalians, as near opponents and factors in ecclesiastical and political change ; and against the Church of England, as having great part with Rome. In his farewell sermon at Simprin, preached from a door in Cockburn's barn to a great concourse of people, Boston summed up his position as to these matters in a masterly paragraph :—“ I leave my testimony to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, as the doctrine of Christ ; and against the errors of the time. And I exhort you to cleave to that doctrine. I give my testimony to the covenanted work of reformation, and believe that the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant were of God ; and I exhort you to cleave thereto, against popery, prelacy, superstition and ceremonies ; and mourn for this, that by the Union a nail is sent from Scotland

<sup>1</sup> Works, I., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.

to fix the Dagon of the English hierarchy in its place in our country.”<sup>1</sup>

Summing up this first and probationary ministry, one can conclude as follows. There is no doubt that the enthusiasms of earlier days were kept. Prayer, instead of having to give place to programme, accompanied every new activity. Studies, although proceeded in with the aid of a few purchased, and perhaps more borrowed books, narrowed somewhat, yet were plied with intensity on the Scriptures. This was but the result of a trend of experience, which, passing by worldly affairs and the average interests of life, sought to dwell upon the sublime realities of religion. Its concentration marked out men as mighty in prayer, mighty in the Word ; it touched with wonder and power the exercised godliness of the time ; its doctrinal interest worked into the national mind both a formal and an abstract sense, carrying discipline, and an abiding preoccupation with highest things. It was such work as should follow the Covenants—definite, determined, intensive.

Outstanding men, like Boston, who maintained this concentration to a pitch, found its yoke easy and its burden light. The impression one has of his ministry is that it advanced in attainment and a sense of personal privilege. Simprin was the appointed place for this man ; and, because he sought to serve diligently, it became a “ field which the Lord had blessed.”<sup>2</sup> Thus he was happy in his Parish and did permanent work. Otherwise he could not have given a token of the worth of our country Ministers as he wrote :—“ Though it was a small charge, yet it was

<sup>1</sup> Works, IV., p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 516 ; Works, IV., p. 465.

my charge ; and I was not to look to be useful, according to the number of those I spoke to, but according to the call of God to speak unto them, whether many or few.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 211.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MINISTRY AT ETTRICK

“Whereas I had before been somewhat easy in the matter, I became so afraid of that transportation, that my heart trembled to think of it ; and therefore in secret protested before the Lord against it, unless He should command me to go.” (Memoirs, Low’s, p. 165.)

THE long process that led up to the ministry at Ettrick was surely exceptional for the times, and an indication that Presbyterianism had not quite set its house in order. As early as the middle of March, 1703, Ettrick had been vacant by the transportation of Mr James McMichen to Hounam. The supply for the year, granted by the Presbytery of Selkirk and in answer to the Kirk Session’s letter of application, consisted of monthly Services. There was one in April, and after the “lambling time” one in June ; a probationer preached once in July ; there were two Services in August and a final one in September. This monthly arrangement maintained to the end of the vacancy. As the Kirk Session records show, the visiting Minister kept Session, dealt with defaulters, and baptised. One cannot make out from the Minutes whether or not the Elders and Precentor held diets of worship on the intervening Sabbaths. The probability is that there were no Services. At the September Session, 1703, Mr Robert Wilson, Minister of Melrose, presided at a meeting which “concluded that every tenant should speak to their Landlords concerning the calling of a Minister to Ettrick. . . . Likewise, Elders were appointed to

supplicate the Presbytery of Selkirk for supply, till they get the masters' answer." <sup>1</sup> Ettrick Elders appeared at the Presbytery meeting of June, 1704, to intimate their selection of one to be their Minister. Upon interrogation, it was discovered that sufficient intimation had not been sent to the Heritors ; which was enjoined. At the June meeting, the Presbytery received a letter direct from Sir Francis Scott of Thirlestane, Ettrick, recommending three candidates. <sup>2</sup> The Presbytery agreed to fall in with the proposal to consider these, but the candidates themselves do not seem to have proceeded in the business. In September, 1704, the visiting Minister reported that "having heard the Elders and householders of the paroch their inclination as to their calling a minister found them yet divided, and that he earnestly entreated them to obstruct no longer the planting of the paroch, but to be unanimous therein." <sup>3</sup> In May, 1705, the Presbytery appointed one of their number attending the June Commission of Assembly "to search after the Heritors of Ettrick and converse with them anent the speedy planting thereof." <sup>4</sup> The result of this was a second letter from Sir Francis Scott bearing a new name recommended to the Presbytery. Again nothing transpired. By November, the Court received an Act of Synod, recommending the exercise of the "jus devolutum." Meeting in January, 1706, they accepted the nomination of a special committee and decided upon Mr Thomas Boston, Minister at Simprin.

<sup>1</sup> "Ettrick Kirk Session Records," vol. I., p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> "Selkirk Presbytery Records," June 29, 1704.

<sup>3</sup> Presbytery Records, September 7, 1704.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1705.

“ The Presbytery were well satisfied with Mr Thomas Boston, and some of those who had heard him preach, and were more intimately acquainted with him, gave a large testimony of his piety, prudence, and other qualifications fitted for that post.”<sup>1</sup> The Presbytery subscribed a call and prepared a letter of intimation for the Heritors. At the first meeting of the Presbytery of Chirnside thereafter, and owing to a mistake about the date, no one appeared from the Presbytery of Selkirk and the call was declared “ fallen from.” At the next meeting, one commissioner appeared and presented an informal commission which was not sustained. The whole matter had now to be referred to the Synod. At its October meeting the Presbytery of Selkirk compeared and gave in a petition. This was supported by the compearance and concurrence of the Laird of Elliston, Proprietor of Brockhope and Cossarshill, Ettrick, and Walter Brydon, Elder and tenant of Crosslee, Ettrick, these two bearing a commission from several parishioners. In addition, there was a petition signed by five Elders and several heads of families. There was also a letter from a representative of Sir Francis Scott, the principal Heritor, bearing “ that he doth not incline to withstand Mr Boston’s settling there.”<sup>2</sup> The Synod ordered the Presbytery to proceed.

On the third of November, 1706, and to have it done before the meeting of his own Presbytery, Boston visited Ettrick, preached, but was not favourably impressed with the place. At the December meeting of the Presbytery of Chirnside a hitch occurred and made necessary a further reference to

<sup>1</sup> “ Selkirk Presbytery Records,” January 17, 1706.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, Low’s, p. 168.

the Synod. Finally, and at the meeting of the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, on the sixth of March, 1707, "transport Mr Thomas Boston" was voted, and the Court "ordered him to be settled minister there (in Ettrick) before the first Tuesday of May ; but that he shall not be obliged to transport his family, till such time as there be a sufficient manse for him in Ettrick." <sup>1</sup> So ended this historic and exceedingly protracted vacancy of Ettrick, from March, 1703, on to May, 1707 ; during which time no stipend required to be paid ! It was not the record by any means, but it wrought sufficient harm to the Parish.

Trouble did not end with the vacancy. When the edict of admission was read, two of the leading Heritors handed in protestations. Another from Sir Francis Scott of Thirlestane was made to the Presbytery, meeting in the Manse before the Service. The ground of objection seems to have been the Presbytery's exercise of its "jus devolutum." This grievance outweighed the fact that a remote and desolate Parish was being taken over by a worthy Minister.

Then, the very date of admission, the first of May, 1707, the same day as the Union of the Parliaments, pointed to another kind of opposition on the part of those who blamed the Church for not hindering the historic step ; and who remained disposed, in future and delicate matters of Church and State, to blame the Union.

On the Sabbath after admission Boston preached from the text of 1 Samuel vii. 12, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." With interest one reads its

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Low's, p. 168.



doctrine :—" It is the duty of the Lord's people to keep the memorial of the experiences which they have of the Lord's helping them. . . . Record your experiences, keep up the memory of them. It is a soul-enriching trade to gather experiences. It makes a strong Christian. It makes one ready to suffer for Christ, and to venture for Him." <sup>1</sup>

Returned to Simprin to prepare for removal, Boston resolved to transport his family to their new home as soon as possible and to face domestic inconvenience for the sake of duty. The journey from the Merse to the Forest took from Tuesday, the seventeenth of June, to Thursday, the nineteenth. Thereafter, the family put up with " a sorry habitation in the old Manse " <sup>2</sup> till the summer of 1708, when a new Manse was built. Sir Francis Scott was particularly active to secure this necessity and comfort for the new Minister.

Boston's second Parish, an outlying one in the Presbytery of Selkirk, was extensive in the extreme, as compared with Simprin. The Kirk stands central, and at a radius of seven miles from a parochial boundary that encircles the ancient lands of the Parish of Rankleburn, (or Buccleuch), the " water-gates " of the Tima and the Ettrick, and the part over at Chapelhope round the Loch of the Lowes. Remote enough too ; for the Manse is situated some eighteen miles from Selkirk ; and in Boston's day contact with the outside world must have been very occasional.

As to Church fabric : according to the Session's minute of 1697 stating " that ye Kirk cannot be gotten repaired without parocheners bring in heather

<sup>1</sup> Works, IV., pp. 53, 59.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 222.

thack and divets, lime and deals,"<sup>1</sup> one can conclude that Ettrick Kirk, although a larger building, was not so ornate a shrine as the pre-Reformation Chapel at Simprin.

However, other things came to be regarded as more unequal, when the divisions among the people were known. There were the dissenters, the followers of Mr John MacMillan, formerly Minister of Balmaghie, who improved their opportunities during the vacancy. Next, a defaulting Heritor had made a party out of dependents and other supporters, the which had effected the removal of the previous Minister and could work against his successor. Then the small congregation of hearers could not be counted on for much, especially since, as Boston indicates, their appetite for Services had not been sharpened by the long fast !

Generally, Boston discerned a hardness among the people. They were unneighbourly among themselves, and given to "scruple and quarrel" matters of religion. Instead of spiritual conference, there were fruitless discussions about the separation, and even over the duty and lawfulness of hearing the Parish Minister preach the gospel. Boston's characterisation is retribution enough :—"The natives generally speaking were naturally smart, and of an uncommon assurance ; self-conceited and censorious to a pitch, using an indecent freedom both with Church and State."<sup>2</sup>

The times of confusion in Church life, when Presbytery struggled against Episcopacy, had left their mark. Persecuted Ministers had visited the

<sup>1</sup> "Ettrick Kirk Session Records," vol. I., p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 214.

Parish and had conveyed something of the spirit of their zealous witnessing. Tradition asserts that Renwick preached his last sermon in a cleuch at Riskenhope : the hill folks would remember.

In a district that had not learned compromise, there was predominance of dissent that sought to work a separating interest. No wonder Boston felt himself from home ; and, for the labour of trying to reconcile such conflicting elements, knew that he was just beginning to be a Minister of a parish.

Boston had to modify his programme of work for Ettrick. Interest in the two regular Services had to be maintained with an effort in the face of evident indifference. Week-day Services were not wanted, and the suggestion to hold them had to be dropped. It was necessary to call attention by pulpit notice to the unbecoming conduct of "several persons who unnecessarily go out and in, and up and down the Kirkyard and about the Kirk in time of divine worship on the Lord's day and disturb others by their undecent carriage." <sup>1</sup> That these people were to be taken notice of and duly censured was intimated from the pulpit. Many discipline cases had to be taken up, including one of "trilapse" <sup>2</sup> on the part of an Elder. Family visitation must have been difficult for a Minister, who could not count on a civil reception in many instances ; and, of course, diets of catechising were deserted. As to preaching, it can be safely concluded that, if Boston went back on old notes, he had to extend them for a certain theme. "But one thing," he writes, "I was particularly surprised with, viz., the prevalency of the sin of

<sup>1</sup> "Ettrick Kirk Session Records," vol. II., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Boston's word in the Kirk Session minute.

profane swearing : and I was amazed to find blessing and cursing proceeding out of the same mouth ; praying persons, and praying in their families too, horrid swearers at times ; so that by the month of November, I behoved to set myself to preach directly against that sin.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus began a ministry that had to bear active opposition for ten long years. By coming to Ettrick, the Minister had improved his worldly circumstances. The earliest extant note of the amount of the emoluments, taken from an interim locality of 1778, shows that the stipend was seven hundred and fifty pounds Scots. Less the few modifications back to 1707, there would be a sufficient remainder. Be that as it may, the real gain to the Minister was the test of difficult circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 215.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISSENTERS

“ The old dissenters continue immovable ; but their increasing  
is ceased.” (Memoirs, p. 476.)

THE purpose of this chapter will be to arrive at Boston's own view of dissent, as proceeding from observation of the people themselves. During the vacancy, the dissenters held one meeting in Ettrick Churchyard. Locally they were of great repute, and did not fail to improve this to the propagation of their views of Church and State. With a clerical leader in Mr John MacMillan, pastor of the United Societies from 1706, the dissenters held occasional Services and received pastoral visits. As early as 1707, Boston had his first encounter with these separatists. It was at the Gair, a house in the part of the Parish lying towards Eskdalemuir, in which latter place MacMillan had just preached. Boston's visit was specially designed to counter the influence of the “ MacMillanites.” The narrative of the incident, which conveys so much, must be given almost in full :—“ When I went in (to the Gair) J.L. showed not common civility. I was set down among three men, strangers, none of whom I knew. They were S.H. of H., Mr St. and Mr Sm. The last I took for Macmillan, having never seen the man. Being set down, I was resolved to divert disputes. . . . Thereafter, one brought in the matter of the separation ; told that he understood I was an enemy to them, and preached against them. . . .

The person whom I took for Mr MacMillan was not like to speak, and therefore I asked for Mr MacMillan. I stayed with them an hour and a half at least ; but saw not Mr MacMillan. When I was coming away, I desired Mr St. to tell him that, seeing I had not seen him, he would come to my house and see me, which he undertook to tell him. . . . Mr MacMillan was in that house in the time, in an outer chamber ; and Adam Linton told me that he was certainly informed, that he caused the lass lock the door, and give him in the key at the door head or foot, whatever was his design in it.”<sup>1</sup>

The Fast, appointed by the civil authorities for the fourteenth of January, 1708, on the alarm of a French invasion and a plan to restore the Stewarts, provoked much opposition in the Parish. Many of the congregation of hearers, influenced doubtless by separatist teaching, deserted the ministry. This particular Fast must have been very obnoxious to the leaders of the separation ; for in their “ Protestation, Declinature, and Appeal ” it is singled out thus :—“ Moreover, we bear testimony against their (the Magistrates) appointing them diets and causes of Fasts, particularly that in January fourteen . . . which is a manifest encroachment upon, and destructive to, the privileges of this Church.”<sup>2</sup> Although Boston had his own scruples about the manner of appointing the same Fast, yet he proceeded according to the proclamation forwarded. It was grievous to him that there had been no correspondence between Church and State as to this Fast. Probably he agreed in his heart with the two from a Fellowship

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, pp. 216, 217.

<sup>2</sup> “ The Covenants and the Covenanters,” J. Kerr, p. 437.

Meeting, who, after being at the Manse and examining the proclamation, said that it had come from an "ill airth."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless Boston decided to act according to his duty ; but the deserted Service in the Church was a heavy sorrow. His words make that very plain :—" I must needs say that the empty room in this Church on the Fast-day is no good sign either for the land or for the parish. If sitting at home or going about your work that day was a way to hold Christ still in the land, I am much mistaken." <sup>2</sup>

A further expression of the disapproval of this Fast was forthcoming for the Minister on his visit to distant Buccleuchshiel for a sermon and baptism. The Sacrament had to be administered at a Service, hence the arrangement. The head of the house who was not a participant in the baptismal service deliberately absented himself from the Worship, but returned afterwards and offered hospitality. This the Minister refused both for himself and his Elders. Boston's comment reads :—" Being alone with him, I told him it was religion to me not to eat there, where I had come with my Master's message, and he had turned his back on it ; and that I caused his meat to be set up again without being tasted, for a testimony." <sup>3</sup> It is interesting to learn that the action of the Minister carried conviction, and that this man, who had been influenced by the separatists, returned to his religious duty with the National Church.

The next affair between parties took place in December of 1708. On a Sabbath there was read at Ettrick Kirk the severely-worded sentence of the Assembly's Commission against Mr John MacMillan,

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219 ; and Works, IV., p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, p. 221.

and Mr John MacNeil, his assistant, who had been a licentiate of the Church. The sentence declared these men to be of "seditious and schismatical principles and practices, contrary to the Word of God, the doctrine of the Church, and the covenanted work of Reformation . . . and charged the people that are led aside unto the same schism to forsake these schismatical ways" <sup>1</sup> (Kirk Session Records). The sermon that day, on 1 Corinthians i. 10, "Now I beseech you . . . that there be no divisions among you," <sup>2</sup> attacked the dissenters' claim to greater strictness, suggested that they might keep communion without taking sin to themselves thereby, and denied that the act of joining in communion with a Church that had many corruptions conveyed taint of the same. The section dealing with their duty to the Establishment, and asserting that it was agreeable to the Covenants, did not touch the point that it had been set up on expediency. This must have given ample room for reply. The section on the duty to the Magistrate argued, as extreme, the separatists' refusal to recognise and pray for the Queen who was "uncovenanted." With regard to the Magistrate's encroachment on the powers of the Church, and particularly the act of dissolving the General Assembly, it was pointed out that sufficient protest had been made. Concerning the appointment of Fasts by the Magistrate, it was asserted that exceptional power to do so is recognised by the Confession of Faith. The sermon concluded with a warning against the danger to one's soul that comes by withdrawing from the means of grace, and a final appeal

<sup>1</sup> "Ettrick Kirk Session Records," vol. II., p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Works, VII., p. 593.



for union, as being in accordance with the mind of Christ who "lays astonishing weight on it." The text quoted is our present-day Union-text, "That they all may be one." Manuscript copies of the sermon were distributed in the Parish.

In December, 1709, and at a Service arranged locally, MacMillan made his reply. From a copy of Boston's sermon he read paragraphs and made comments ; but he departed without leaving a copy of his sermon and reply, a fact that was remarked—even by the Minister from the pulpit. MacMillan's day brought out a considerable congregation to Ettrick Kirk, and it was Boston's shrewd suspicion that many had attended to show that they wished to have no part in the dissenters' meeting.

One other happening concludes the narration of Boston's relations with the "old dissenters." In 1729, a family consisting of a husband, wife and son, and living at lonely Broadgairhill, were in distress through illness. A pastoral visit was offered by letter and ungraciously refused. The Minister felt keenly the repelling of his attentions, and wrote in the *Memoirs* :—"O my soul, come not thou into their secret in the matter of Church communion ! unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united in point of separation !" <sup>1</sup>

From all that has been stated, one cannot escape the conclusion that this separation from the Revolution Settlement Church was extreme in character and embittered and hostile in spirit, also alienated from the practical service the Church had to render to the Nation's life. After all, the Church had place and recognition, for which its wisest supporters were

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 428.

thankful. Its most faithful Ministers were the true helpers of their generation both in giving intensified service and in seeking to reconcile extreme elements. It was really the difference between "strict" and "extreme" that made the separation. It was one thing to assert the divine right of Presbytery and work normally for its extension, as the ideal form of Church government ; it was quite another to proceed by insistence and the severance of relationships.

Of a different temper were the followers in dissent of Mr John Hepburn, the separating Minister of Urr. Boston had dealings with them, chiefly towards the end of his ministry, and with an express purpose of closer fellowship. It was in 1730 that a party of five attended at Ettrick Manse and discussed the situation. "I found them," writes Boston, "to be men having a sense of religion on their spirits, much weighted with their circumstances as destitute of a minister, (Hepburn died in 1723), endowed with a good measure of Christian charity and love, and of a very different temper from that of Mr MacMillan's followers."<sup>1</sup> It came out at the interview that the good people desired the benefit of ordinances, and that they were prepared to offer testimonials from their Meeting to obtain them. In reply, Boston indicated that he could accept only those testimonials that were from the hands of their own Parish Ministers. To have done anything else would have amounted to the recognition of the separation. The meeting concluded without result, except that, as Boston records, "we parted on the morrow after, but with great affection and much heaviness on both sides."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Low's, pp. 318, 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 318, 319.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE OATH OF ABJURATION

“ For all that I heard advanced to clear the difficulties about it, I still continued a scrupler.” (Memoirs, p. 264.)

THE Abjuration Oath was first imposed in England in 1701. All in military, civil, or ecclesiastical appointments abjured allegiance to “ the person pretended to be Prince of Wales, during the life of the late King James, and, since his decease, pretending to be, and taking upon himself the style and title of King of England, by the name of James the Third, or of Scotland by the name of James the Eighth.” <sup>1</sup> By the same Oath they swore to bear faith and true allegiance to her Majesty, Queen Anne, and promised “ to defend the succession of the crown against him, the said James, as the same is and stands settled by an Act entitled, An Act declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession of the crown to her present Majesty, and the heirs of her body, being Protestants.” <sup>2</sup> With this reference to the Act of Settlement, was a further one to the limitation of the succession, in default of issue, to the Princess Sophia of Hanover and her heirs, being Protestants. Thus the Act was an instrument of defence against the Church of Rome, as well as a means of exclusion of the exiled dynasty, so closely associated with it. Further, these Acts, on which the Abjuration Oath depended, required that the

<sup>1</sup> “ The History of Scotland,” J. Struthers, vol. I., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I., p. 159.

Sovereign be a member of the Church of England and that he should maintain the English hierarchy, as established by law. This was certainly a pre-Union and English form of oath. It secured at once the Protestantism of the Throne and the special interest of the Church of England.

After the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, the Abjuration Oath was imposed in Scotland on all in civil and military positions. It was not required of the clergy. For the Scottish mind, the question of the lawfulness of taking it had to be faced. The reference, as above, was well-known and often discussed, notably among the dissenters. A clause in the Act of Security (Union of Parliaments, 1707) had been inserted to safeguard Scottish subjects against unlawful oaths, and this had the Abjuration Oath in view. A pamphlet of the day gives an interesting note which is very much to the same point :—"That oath was calculated for England before the Union, and as the Church saw that clause (*re* membership of the Church of England) to be contrair to our known principles, so, for as unfaithful your partie are pleased to call them, they very fairly represented this particular to our Parliament . . . though I confess they met with more unkindly acceptance therein, than might have been expected at the hand of a Scots Parliament ; and the strongest reason for their rejecting this part of the address (of the Church) that ever I heard was, it was an English oath, and therefore might not be touched." <sup>1</sup> In the circumstances, guidance was sought from the General Assembly of 1708, and secured no more than a

<sup>1</sup> "The Friendly Conference, or A Discourse between the Countryman and his Nephew," Edinburgh, 1711, p. 43.

recommendation that the matter should be decided individually. Boston regarded the Oath as one of the snares that had come in with the Union, and he lamented the action of the Assembly in "shifting" the matter.

Affairs remained in this state till 1712, when the Abjuration Oath was required of Ministers. It had been inserted in the Toleration Act of the same year, which allowed it as "free and lawful for those of the Episcopal Communion in Scotland to meet for divine worship, to be performed after their own manner."<sup>1</sup> It was at the instigation of the Presbyterian representatives who had been sent to London thereanent that the Abjuration Oath had been required. They advised that Episcopalians should be required to take it; for they hoped to hinder Episcopalian toleration by insisting on a political disclaimer the party could not give. The government replied by imposing the Oath on Presbyterians and Episcopalians alike. This appeared to be the seizing of an opportunity of securing equal extension of the abjuration for England and Scotland. Closer to the conflict of circumstances, however, the government's action was strictly within policy. The fact is that the Toleration Act was Lockhart's, and the declared intention of its author, "that the establishment of the Kirk would in time be overturned, as it was obvious that the security thereof was not so thoroughly established by the Union as they imagined."<sup>2</sup> The move against that had been insistence on abjuration; and the counter-move, abjuration for both parties.

<sup>1</sup> "Statutes at Large," vol. IV., p. 513.

<sup>2</sup> "The Lockhart Papers," George Lockhart of Carnwath; London, 1817, vol. I., p. 418.

Presbyterian objection to the Oath on religious grounds was as well-known as Episcopal objection to it on political grounds. The outcome brought disquiet to those of the Establishment. Only a few of the Episcopalians took the Oath, while they, as a party, actually lost nothing in religious freedom ; among the Presbyterians a separation was almost effected, and on the point anticipated, namely, that a party and ministry under an oath of the Covenants would not countenance anything that seemed to sanction Episcopacy.

The General Assembly could not “shift” the problem this time. Discussions in 1712 showed two parties in the House, the “scruplers” and the “clear brethren.” It was felt that the taking of the Oath meant sanctioning the unscriptural hierarchy and the ceremonies of the Church of England. Those who regarded the main and original consideration of the Abjuration Oath, that it sought to secure a Protestant succession, had no difficulty in taking it. Yet the recusants were strong, and a rupture of parties was only prevented by the influence of Principal Carstares, “for which cause,” writes Boston generously, “I did always thereafter honour him in my heart.”<sup>1</sup>

Boston was present at this debate and took sides with the “scruplers.” At the door of the Assembly-house he bought a copy of the Act in order to learn the penalties for refusal. Returned home, and after careful perusal and consideration of the Act that framed the Abjuration Oath, he discovered “the declared intent of the Oath to be, to preserve the Act inviolable upon which the security of the Church

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 264.

of England depends . . . and upon that shocking discovery," he continues, "my heart was turned to loath that Oath which I had before scrupled."<sup>1</sup> So much was this a weight upon his mind that, as Moderator of the Synod, he did what few have done, called a "pro re nata" meeting of that superior Court. This met on the seventeenth of June, 1712. The minutes show that general considerations were allowed for record, but not the special business. The relative paragraphs<sup>2</sup> in Boston's Memoirs are the "minutes." The declared intention of the Oath, as interpreted by Boston, seems to have put the objection to taking it in quite a new light to many of the Brethren. In the discussion, Mr James Ramsay, Minister of Eyemouth, distinguished the Church of England as a Protestant Church in one aspect, and in another as having a certain government and ceremonies ; and admitted the intent of the Oath in the first sense only. Boston could not accept this distinction. In addition, he feared toleration of the "curates" within the Church and of the malignants outside it. Taking everything into consideration, he regarded this further move in the requiring of the Oath as calculated to put Ministers in a false and unworthy position.

The question of the abjuration soon wrought a cleavage throughout the Church. Although some two-thirds of the Brethren took the Oath, in important cases it was with reservation. This was the manner in which Carstares himself took it. The wise action of the Synod of Dumfries went beyond mere protest, when it furnished its members with a declaration to the effect that in taking the Oath one did nothing

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 265.

contrary to the true Protestant religion of the country, as protected by the Act of Security.

Locally, and showing the influence of the dissenters, the aversion to the Oath became very marked. Boston writes that his Parish were all against it and intent that he should keep honest ! Ministers generally were distinguished as jurors or non-jurors. Intercommunion, as expressed by assistance at Sacraments, became difficult ; and members themselves, and mostly those against the Oath, “scrupled ” to take Sacrament with jurant Ministers. Amid these complications, the Ettrick Minister stumbled upon a further difficulty by being not unwilling, although a non-juror himself, to assist at the Communion of Brethren who had been free to swear the Oath of Abjuration. In this, as in other things appertaining, he went his own way.

Being in Edinburgh in the autumn of the year, he took legal advice as to the safe disposal of his property. The penalty under the Act was a fine of five hundred pounds sterling, a sum in excess of all the stipend he had ever received. As rigorous application of the law was expected, there was no other means of escape than to make over a tenement he possessed in Duns to his eldest son, and all his other worldly goods to a trusted servant-man, John Currie.

This mixing of prudence in worldly affairs with zeal for witnessing might be regarded as taking away from the quality of his absolute determination to stand to principle. Boston did not think so. He records the twenty-sixth of October, 1712, as the last Sabbath, on which he officiated as the legally protected Parish Minister. His text was Philippians iii. 8, “ For whom I have suffered the loss of all



things ” <sup>1</sup>—in his case, the language of a modified calamity ! In the same “ ordinary ” he had declared :—“ This day, alas ! is a day in which the commands of our rulers on the ministry of this Church cannot be obeyed in the judgment of many worthy ministers, without disobeying our great Lord and Master ; though others are not of that mind. This threatens to rend this Church asunder, to separate ministers from their flocks, and to shut up many Kirk doors, and yours among the rest.” <sup>2</sup>

As it turned out, the penalties of the law were stayed.

In the neighbouring Parish of Wamphray the imposition of the Oath meant schism. Mr John Taylor from his pulpit denounced all Ministers who had taken it as guilty of perjury, and the judicatories of the Church for their part in the matter as having forfeited all power. In 1713 Taylor was in Ettrick and discussed the new situation with Boston. The relative note in the Memoirs is of value as giving a first-hand “ observe ” on this man’s attitude. Boston writes :—“ Finding him inclined to separation on account of the Oath, I earnestly argued against it from Holy Scriptures ; and he seemed not to be very peremptory, nor much to set himself to answer my arguings.” <sup>3</sup> Later, and taking part in family worship, Taylor had the bad taste to make the evening exposition of Scripture an occasion for venting his separatist opinions. As there were several strangers present, this “ feeding of the reeling and separating humour among the people ” <sup>4</sup> was justly considered very much out of place.

<sup>1</sup> Works, IV., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> Memoirs, p. 272.

Boston, whose courteous visit was a return to his, attended the Sacrament of Wamphray in July. He arrived at the time of a preaching, and so took his seat among the hearers in the Churchyard. At the close, all were invited to stand, and by holding up their hands to signify their adherence to the National Covenant and to the Solemn League and Covenant. As Boston did not join in this, he had fears that afterwards it might be owned against him.

The issue of Taylor's headstrong course is soon told. When Boston learned that process was to be taken in Church courts, and knowing that Taylor was in many ways a worthy man, he wrote a letter of brotherly counsel; this was never even acknowledged. Suspension was the sentence of the Presbytery of Lochmaben in 1715; deposition, that of the Synod of Dumfries in the same year; and the General Assembly of 1717 appointed the Presbytery to excommunicate.

Taylor had a considerable following, the "Taylorites," as they were called. He continued preaching in Wamphray and Eskdalemuir. His utter alienation from the methods and spirit of the Church of Scotland can be stated in Wodrow's note, 1723, "that Taylor swears all at baptisms never to hear established Ministers." <sup>1</sup>

At the accession of George First, and in view of political upheavals, the Oath of Abjuration was reimposed. Thanks to representations by the General Assembly, which declared the undoubted loyalty of the clergy and their scruples only on the point of the form of the Oath, an alteration was made. Instead of the phrase, "as the same is and stands

<sup>1</sup> "Correspondence," Wodrow, vol. III., p. 14.

settled by an Act," this was substituted :—" Which is and stands settled." <sup>1</sup> The latter could be held as indicating the succession, rather than implying its qualification to be in membership with the Church of England. The distinction was very narrow ; but it was supported by a statement that the Oath intended nothing to the prejudice of the Scottish Church.

Even after all this, Boston remained a non-juror. Against the first of December, the ultimate day for taking the Oath, he writes that he found his courage for suffering not so much as on a former occasion. Then, an Elder's clumsy remark did not help :—" I think we must let you all (the Ministers) do as you like, and strive to know Christ and Him crucified." <sup>2</sup> The parishioners certainly did as they liked ; for some deserted the ministry, and others openly associated themselves with the schism at Wamphray.

In bettered circumstances for Presbyterians, the matter of securing a proper form of the Abjuration Oath was taken up in a practical manner in the year 1716. By February, 1717, a deputation from the General Assembly's Commission arrived in London to put before the government such a form of Oath as the Ministers could take. Instead of refining further on the words "scrupled," the legislators followed out the suggestion to omit reference to the Act of Settlement. An Act of Parliament of 1719 reimposed what was simply an oath making abjuration. Attending in the Capital in April of the same year, Mr William Gusthart, Minister of Crailing, as representative of the non-jurors, gave in a statement

<sup>1</sup> "Scotland and the Union," W. L. Mathieson, p. 204, note ; p. 236, note.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 299.

of what was stumbling in the Oath, and an address of loyalty to the Throne.

A copy of this document had been handed round the Synod for subscription. Boston refused to sign ; but to show his loyalty, as he would have it known, he willingly subscribed to the expenses of the deputation. Boston's attitude is hard to make out here. In view of the times, his recusancy was disloyal enough ; and he would not follow his Brethren who shared his scruples, but who intended to make their own loyalty very clear.

The wisdom of the action that had been taken by the government was soon evident. Most of the non-jurors took the Oath. A small body of extremists (between thirty and forty in all) including Boston and his friends, Mr Henry Davidson, Minister of Galashiels, and Mr Gabriel Wilson, Minister of Maxton, remained outside the government's consideration. And their reasons ? Boston's pamphlet, "Reasons for Refusing the Abjuration Oath in its Latest Form, 1719," is not obtainable, so that one has to turn for guidance to a note in Wodrow's "Correspondence." It gives that "this new form of Oath does not satisfy all . . . from an opinion that this form of Oath involves an approbation of the impositions we lie under in this Church." The reference is to the Acts of Toleration and Patronage. "Correspondence," II., p. 464. This extraordinary position is further made out from the same, pp. 246-251 ; 408-13 ; 450.

No one will deny that the action of the non-jurors—no matter how the Oath was brought upon them—had value in securing a just form of wording. From the first the Oath was an English one, and ought

to have been adapted after the Union. In the pamphlet previously cited, "A Discourse Between the Countryman and his Nephew," there is to be found this sensible and very apposite passage :—"I confess, Nephew, that I think the imposing of this Oath, with this qualification of the Sovereign, is a great grievance to Scotland. For that he should be a Protestant in the general is enough betwixt two Protestant nations differing in many things. And, if they will condescend to particulars, I see no reason why the Scots nation should swear he shall be of the communion of the Church of England, more than the English should swear he shall be of the communion of the Church of Scotland ; and I am persuaded the casting out that qualification is so just, that had our Parliament had the courage to require this of the English, it had been as soon granted as desired." <sup>1</sup>

The local effects of this third and modified imposition were considerable, so much so, that a joint conference of the Presbyteries of Selkirk and Jedburgh—Ministers and members together—was held at Hawick to discuss issues. Boston, who presided, recounts that nothing was done to heal the breach between the clergy and the people. A committee that was then appointed met subsequently at Lilliesleaf with more result, some kind of accommodation being come to.

Relationships within the ministry itself are indicated by Boston's remark that "the few recusants were treated as aliens." <sup>2</sup>

The government continued its clemency and legal penalties were not enforced.

<sup>1</sup> "A Discourse between the Countryman and his Nephew," p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 341.

## CHAPTER VIII

### “ THE FIFTEEN ”

“ Nevertheless our people were very unconcerned about the matter, and would by no means see the danger ; but were in a manner fond of public confusions, not being hearty friends to either party, and that upon the principles of the dissenters.” (Memoirs, Low’s, p. 206.)

AT a Fast-day Service in February, 1714, Boston delivered an arresting topical sermon,<sup>1</sup> which gives clearly a near view of historic events. The signs of the times are noted ; the arrival of Papists in great numbers ; the fact that malignant Jacobites were making common cause with Papists ; the general apprehension that the Pretender was likely to succeed and that from him “ nothing can be more expected than the ruin of the Protestant religion.” The sins of the generation are recorded :—the sinful Union between Scotland and England, judged as endangering Covenanted religion ; the worldliness of all ranks of the people ; the mocking of seriousness, so that “ they who have a sense of religion on their spirits are reckoned to have foundered in their education ; ” the sins of professors of religion,—general deadness, formality, lukewarmness and carnality. Boston’s expectation is that one can look forward to closed Churches, that will be opened some day for the mass, or, if earlier, for “ the English service which yet will be but an expedient to prepare us for Popery.” There followed in the sermon a heightened description of the barbarities of historic persecutions ; and a

<sup>1</sup> Works, II., pp. 130-138.

terrible paragraph on the massacre of Piedmont concluded :—" I am not speaking, my brethren, of devils, but of Papists." Even the consubstantiation of the Hanoverian King's religion is discussed and extenuated on the ground that Lutherans do not worship the Sacrament. Over against the Presbyterian divisions the union of Papists and malignants is set once more :—" Herod and Pontius Pilate are become friends. The mass and the English service are contributing joint endeavours to ruin the Church of Scotland. Papists and malignants agree together against us ; and some will tell you that they would rather be Papists than Presbyterians. Some of them acknowledge the Church of Rome as a true Church, but not the Church of Scotland. They will have us to be no ministers, because we want Episcopal ordination, and you no Christians, because ye are unbaptised in their account, as not being baptised by ministers having such ordination."

These were the Scottish conditions prior to " The Fifteen," and as made out by a religiously pre-occupied mind. For the Presbyterians, the political project, that dominated and united the parties opposite, was always viewed with its sure religious outcome ; and this proved the grand factor in strengthening resistance to the Stewart cause. Indeed, both in Church and State, Reformation principles had done their work. People enjoyed a larger measure of freedom than the last of the Stewarts would ever have allowed. By resistance, therefore, the Church rendered a true service to the larger destiny of the State.

With news that the rebellion had broken out, Boston received for his Parish a circular from a

patriotic Association in Edinburgh. This “ Association of Men of Quality and Substance ” rendered unique service in crisis by sending out a document that is not very well-known, but that by its solemn appeal helped to rouse the nation to action. In stirring strain it declared :—“ We do persuade ourselves it will be the business of every honest man to look up with spirit, and do his utmost to maintain and defend our present happy condition, which, by the blessing of God, nothing can make desperate but our sloth and cowardice.” <sup>1</sup> The Association, and a kindred one equally active, called for subscriptions and asked that voluntary associations of men should be formed for military service.

After carefully considering the effect the circular would have, the good Minister of Ettrick was of opinion that the men of his Parish would give its proposals but scant entertainment. He put this down chiefly to “ their selfish principle and disposition.” <sup>2</sup> He knew also that the dissenters would fight neither for the persecuting Stewarts nor the “ uncovenanted ” King, and that their example would have weight. However, he set himself to rouse the Parish. In the month of August, 1715, Boston delivered an impressive utterance from the Ettrick pulpit. The text was Isaiah xxxii. 2, “ And a man shall be as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” It was certainly not in his best manner that he should describe royal James Stewart as “ a limb of Antichrist ” (though it was daring enough), yet the sheer conviction of the man spoke out in these challenging words :—“ Our holy religion must

<sup>1</sup> “ The History of Scotland,” J. Struthers, vol. I., p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 291.



go, and idolatry and superstition come in its room ; we and our families must be murdered, or renounce our religion ; . . . our Protestant King must go, and a Papist ascend the throne, and the Covenanted work of Reformation be rooted out, unless that people act for their defence against the Antichristian party : I know no mids this day.”<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the men of Ettrick in this day of noblest appeal and destiny makes one sick at heart. A review of all, aged between sixteen and sixty, was called for the sixth of October and at Selkirk. A meeting of the parish people took place in Ettrick Kirk, names were carefully gone over and a roll prepared by the Minister. Throughout the proceedings, resentment at this personally inconvenient state of affairs was freely expressed, much blame was put upon the Ministers of the Church, and, for the beginning of local annoyance, it was hinted that the Manse might be burned down. In spite of these unpleasant things, and furnished with the aforesaid roll of names, Boston accompanied his gallant parishioners to the rendezvous at Selkirk. Towards the end of the journey, fear of the issue of events must have been too much for them, because they set on the Parish Minister who carried the fatal roll, and loaded him with reproaches. Arrived in the Town and discussing affairs with them, Boston was called out of the room where they were, to speak to a brother Minister. From him he learned that the review of his Parish had been taken without a roll. Here was a way out. The Ettrick roll was quickly recovered from the clerk who had it and secretly destroyed at the Minister's hands. Then

<sup>1</sup> Works, IX., p. 229.

his people were frankly informed by him that the roll of their names would not be forthcoming, that their Minister would rather take censure from others than from those of his own religious charge, that he would give them an address that had been prepared for presentation, and that he himself would have to leave them to attend a Presbytery meeting, which he had just heard had been hurriedly convened for that day.

In the circumstances, there could be only one result, and of his determining : when the Ettrick roll was called for, no such thing could be produced ; and, of the few parishioners remaining in the Town, not a single person answered for the honour of his home place. Boston's comment jars :—“ Thus Providence most seasonably discovered a way to extricate me out of this perplexity.” <sup>1</sup> Both Minister and people are inexcusably to blame for conduct that marks Ettrick's blackest day in all its history.

One is relieved to find that, while fear of his parishioners prevailed with the Minister, fear of the enemy did not. Rebel troops began now to pass through the Parish to a southern concentration of forces. A person in high command with his attendants lodged one night in Crosslee. The Earl of Winton took up his quarters for a night at Midgehope. On Sabbath, the sixteenth of October, and giving but one day's notice, intimation was read in the Kirk that heritors, freeholders, tenants, householders and fencible men, repair with their best horse and arms to Kelso by ten o'clock on the seventeenth. This precipitate action became necessary, owing to the fact that troops under the command of MacIntosh

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 293.

of Borlum, Mar's lieutenant, had crossed the Forth and landed in East Lothian.

As things appeared that day in Ettrick, by rumour, proclamation, and a further report that a rebel force was on the march from Hawick to Selkirk, sorely tried must have been the fearful minds of those who wished to abide by the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of flocks: Judges v. 14-23 and Proverbs xxiv. 11 and 12 had been read to them. And on the Monday? Boston records that he could not even get an Elder to go with him to the Synod, which had been convened for Kelso on the eighteenth. Alone he journeyed, and alone he was present in the Town to represent his Parish. But he is not alone in taking shame for his people's base conduct; for none can read this entry in our Scottish annals without sharing his feelings:—"People from all corners, and from our neighbouring Parish of Yarrow particularly, had come in to the help of the Lord against the mighty; which made me ashamed, considering that there was none of ours there."<sup>1</sup> What Sir William Scott of Thirlestane thought of his own Ettrick, he who, as Preces Deputy-Lieutenant of the County, had ordered the rendezvous, stands not recorded.

As events turned out, there was no engagement at Kelso.

Illustrative of the line taken by ecclesiastical authority is the action of the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale. The drafting of a "Warning" was entrusted to Ramsay of Eyemouth and Boston of Ettrick. A perusal of the full text of the same will show that, while the diction has not the directness

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 295.

a military proclamation would have had, in its own way it points the need of “ a becoming zeal for our most holy religion, and for the preservation of His Majesty’s person and government.”

*Warning by the Provincial Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, the nineteenth day of October, one thousand, seven hundred and fifteen years.*

The Synod, considering that our most holy religion as well as the sacred person of our rightful and lawful Sovereign, King George, are in imminent danger by reason of a most horrid rebellion, already broken out and carried on in our land in favour of a Popish pretender by a party of men, many of whom have by oath professed, testified, and declared in their consciences that he, the said pretender, hath no right nor title whatsoever to the crown ; and considering likewise that these rebels are emitting papers, cunningly conceived and monstrously handed about, disguising their horrid purposes, that they deceive well-meaning people, as if they intended to have grievances redressed, and the peace and quiet of the nation more effectively established ; and considering likewise that the party now in arms in favour of the pretender is the very same with which the Church of Scotland since the Reformation hath had her wrestlings even unto blood, striving against sin and bearing testimony unto the glorious work of the Reformation, to which we stand bound by our solemn Covenants ; and it is not to be doubted, if this cruel party prevail, as God forbid !, we shall find their little finger heavier than their father’s loins, and everything that is, or ought to be, dear to us, whether as men or

Christians, subverted ; therefore the Synod, that they may not be wanting in their duty to God, their King, and their Country, and to prevent the people's being seduced by the artifices of our enemies, do hereby appoint the ministers within their bounds, by public preaching and by private conversation, faithfully and diligently to labour to fix in their people a deep sense of the impiety and profaneness that abounds among all ranks, and particularly our ingratitude for our signal mercies and remarkable deliverances God in his infinite goodness hath bestowed upon us both of old and of late, which is the true cause of all our trouble ; and to excite them to lay hold upon God in Christ by faith, and to turn to him by repentance, that iniquity may not be our ruin ; and to stir them up in their respective stations to express a becoming zeal for our most holy religion, and for the preservation of his Majesty's person and government against a Popish pretender and all his abettors ; and, further, that as they have been earnest and fervent, so they are hereby exhorted most earnestly and fervently to pray for his Majesty, King George, their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales and their royal issue, and that God in His infinite goodness may defeat the designs and purposes of the rebels, strike them with terror, fill them with shame and confusion, and powerfully maintain what He hath wonderfully wrought in favour of His Church and people in these lands ; and that we may never want one of the royal line of our gracious Sovereign, King George, to rule over us to latest posterity ; and, lastly, it is hereby appointed that all the ministers within the bounds of this Synod do read this act from the pulpit upon Lord's day come eight days,

or sooner, if it come to their hand, with suitable exhortations to the occasion, and to report their diligence. (Signed) Gabriel Wilson.

To conclude the incidents of “ The Fifteen ” for Ettrick, one passes over the further alarms in the Parish ; the Minister’s fear that the Kirk would be used by passing soldiers as a billet ; the posting of watchers on the heights above Ramsaycleuch and Ettrickhall during time of public service ; the squabbling over the payment of five shillings and six pence sterling, by masters, servants and old men alike ; the matter they could not “ shift ”—the sending of militiamen, “ four they hired, all out of the Parish, except one who had been a while in it.” <sup>1</sup> In November, news of Dunblane (Sheriffmuir) reached this ill-conditioned place and quieted apprehensions ; local differences could now be resumed. Long afterwards, when aggravations wore out the patience of the Minister, he showed what had remained in his mind, and was ready to admonish his people thus :—“ In time of war, we were all men of peace, not a man among us to lend a hand to the defence of the public cause, for our King and country, religion and liberty, though called thereto publicly by public authority. Is it not sinful and shameful to be men of war then in time of peace ? ” <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Works, V., p. 177.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CLOSEBURN AFFAIR

“ Herewith they were much alarmed ; and in their own rough way showed a mighty concern for my continuance among them.”  
(Memoirs, p. 309.)

THE complicated and tedious process, carried on through the Church Courts and for the one purpose of transporting a Minister against his wishes to a Parish insistent on having him, belongs to the obsolete practice of the Church. Owing to his appearances at the Penpont Sacraments and his known friendship for Mr James Murray, the Parish Minister, Boston had unwittingly commended himself as a suitable person for the vacancy in the neighbouring Parish of Closeburn. Indeed, a man of gifts was needed there. The charge had been vacant from 1709 (and remained so till 1718), and the place had become a centre of separatists.

The local intention with regard to the Minister of Ettrick was first mentioned to him as he returned homewards. The Chaplain of Closeburn House met him and told that his transportation had been discussed by Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick on the evening after the Sacrament. There is no evidence that Boston showed any inclination to change his Parish. All that happened is that he was desired by a Heritor and his people who were prepared to be active in the matter.

At the end of September, 1716, the Ettrick folks knew that a call had been prepared for their Minister

by the Parish of Closeburn. They were mightily disturbed at the prospect of losing one, whom they had opposed for a decade, and learned to respect. They would take action. Two Elders adventured a winter journey to Closeburn for the purpose of stopping the transportation, but without result. In January, 1717, commissioners arrived at a meeting of Selkirk Presbytery, presented their credentials, were found at fault with these in something Boston detected, and so lost their errand. Early in February, Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick himself, with two Ministers of the Presbytery of Penpont and a representative of the Parish of Closeburn, made a complimentary visit to Ettrick Manse ; then proceeded to a meeting of the Presbytery, where again commissions were rejected. They appealed to the Synod. In the meantime, and at the desire of the Kirk Session, a Congregational Fast was held in Ettrick. The importance of the occasion was recognised by the visit of three members of the local Presbytery, all of whom preached and offered prayers for guidance. "And that day," writes Boston, "the Laird of Tushielaw (the defaulting Heritor and maker of a party in the Parish), who all along to that time had deserted my ministry, came to the Kirk, being zealous for my continuance in the place. He gave due attendance all along thereafter while he lived." <sup>1</sup>

The April Synod sustained the rejected commissions, appointed the Presbytery of Selkirk to proceed in the business, but were met by the pursuers' direct appeal to the General Assembly. At this point in the process, Boston received the call from the Synod. This bore 118 names.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 313.



The Assembly of 1717, at a sederunt of which Boston recommended "The Marrow of Modern Divinity" to Mr John Drummond, Minister of Crieff, disposed of his immediate concern of transportation by appointing the Parish of Closeburn to prosecute their call ; first before the Presbytery of Selkirk with powers to appeal to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, or before the Commission of Assembly, whichever should meet earlier. The Presbytery, making its final endeavour to keep Boston, refused transportation ; and the Synod did likewise. In Edinburgh, and on the fifteenth of August, 1717, the Commission of Assembly deliberated the matter. At the commencement, the general feeling seems to have been that transportation would be the finding of the Court ; but Boston in an able speech turned opinion to his wishes. His case stood on this candid statement :—"The Parish of Closeburn is so considerable, numerous, and divided, that it is a burden quite too heavy for me. . . . I have had too much acquaintance with myself in the management of the Parish of Ettrick to think that I am fit to undertake the charge of the Parish of Closeburn." <sup>1</sup>

The Commission refused transportation, and the matter took end.

The Congregational Thanksgiving, held at Ettrick in September, was improved to the recognition of these things : the Kirk Session minute recalled the Fast, whereat the people had sought a special mercy for their Parish, and emphasised the duty of thanksgiving in the favourable circumstances. Mr Gabriel Wilson, Minister of Maxton, and Mr Henry Davidson, Minister of Galashiels, thought the event worthy of

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 323.

their considerable journeys to Ettrick, where they preached.

Boston's own discourse that day passed by all self-congratulation and, as he would have put it, "improved the occasion." His sermon was entitled, "Thanksgiving for My Continuance in Ettrick,"<sup>1</sup> and his text, from Proverbs xxix. 18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish : but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Therefrom, this doctrine was made out :—"Though the want of the ministry of the Word makes a people very unhappy, yet it is not the having of it, but the right improving of it that makes them happy." "You, my brethren," he continued in a most effective reference, "have shown on the late occasion a great concern to have the ministry continued among you, and I hope you are convinced that the design pursued was very unacceptable to me. Now Providence has turned the matter according to the desire of us both. But let us not sit down upon it, as if that were enough to make all well with us in the relation of pastor and people. We need the Lord's hand to it, to put efficacy in the mercy for the good of us both."

<sup>1</sup> Works, III., pp. 372-378.

## CHAPTER X

### THE “ MARROW ” CONTROVERSY

“ That weighty affair, by means whereof I received another sensible increase of light into the doctrine of grace, especially as to the ‘ gift and grant ’ made of Christ unto sinners of mankind, and as to the nature of faith.” (Memoirs, p. 365.)

BEHIND the doctrinal controversies of the Revolution Church lay the administrative necessity of maintaining the accepted Standards. Looking thereto, the General Assembly had its “ Act for the Preserving of Purity of Doctrine,” 1710. It was a great part of the duty of the Church to teach the doctrines of the Church to its generation. Questions of establishment and forms of government were settled ; and now this stood as priority. Accordingly, vigilance in this direction reached to the work of a University, in the Simson case ; to the conduct of a Presbytery, in the Auchterarder case ; and generally, to the duties of Ministers, who had been enjoined to preach catechetical doctrine.

The case against Professor Simson of Glasgow, and that with the Presbytery of Auchterarder, were both on the agenda of the Assembly of 1717, which Boston attended. With regard to the former, present interest calls for the setting down of an estimate of the official finding thereanent. Boston, who was afterwards to be in opposition to the leading men of the Church, and on a doctrinal matter, declares the gravity of the Professor’s offence in a very climax of heresies : that it was an attack on the doctrine of the grace of Christ, on the doctrine of the person

of Christ, and on the foundations of Christianity. That is why he regarded the sentence of Act IX., 1717, as a measure that ended the case "with great softness to the Professor."<sup>1</sup>

The finding in the Auchterarder case discharged the Presbytery to use any other formula for licence, ordination, or admission, than what had been prescribed. Their offence had been occasioned by their over-diligence in sifting the beliefs of one, Mr William Craig, their candidate, passed in all requirements for licence and appealing against an additional and unauthorised test imposed. The Presbytery of Auchterarder did not find his replies satisfactory to a proposition, that was afterwards notorious as "The Auchterarder Creed,"<sup>2</sup> and which reads :—"And further, That I believe that it is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin, in order to our coming to Christ and instating us in Covenant with God." The General Assembly expressed its abhorrence of the proposition, sustained the appeal, and gave instructions for the granting of Mr Craig's licence.

The aforesaid proposition carried more in the event than this official denial ; for it focussed upon itself the lines of interest of the two separate tendencies that were declaring themselves in the teaching of the Church. With regard to personal religion, one of these sought to emphasise the act of acceptance, and, in order to exclude any work of merit, made forsaking of sin an act that followed faith ; the other, viewing the beginnings of the divine life as prior to

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 317 ; and "Acts of the General Assembly," 1638-1842, p. 519.

the fiducial act, asserted the presence of gracious qualifications, and a very real prior work of repentance and forsaking. The former preached gift and acceptance, the latter, law and obedience. The one said, You possess and you will never lose ; the other, This is your duty ; go on till you attain somewhat of assurance. As being agreeable to the statement, but especially to the spirit of the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, the official position was the second of the aforesaid. That is why the Assembly rejected the Auchterarder proposition.

Boston's preoccupation with the decision about his transportation to Closeburn, and, for the particular debate, his confessed timidity to speak in the House, caused him to remain silent while the Auchterarder case was being settled. Of this conduct he was afterwards most ashamed ; and both to make amends and to witness for the truth, as he conceived it, he spoke to his own position at the reading of the minutes.

Nevertheless, Thomas Boston made history at the same General Assembly. Sitting in the House, and discussing the gospel offer with Mr John Drummond, the Minister of Crieff, *re* the texts, Isaiah lv. 1, and St Matthew xi. 28, he gave his interpretation of these. Determined by the teaching of the " Marrow," this would appraise the deed of gift and grant which conferred individual right of acceptance and which had been made to all mankind sinners. Thereafter in conversation " The Marrow of Modern Divinity " was commended. Mr Drummond secured a copy in Edinburgh, read it with much satisfaction, then passed on the book to Mr James Hog, the Minister of Carnock. The obscure volume that Boston thought to give to a brother Minister, Hog decided should be

introduced to the attention of the whole Church ; so in 1718 he published the ninth and corrected edition of " The Marrow of Modern Divinity," Part I. The second part, dealing with the Commandments, was not brought out in Scotland till after 1721, and then anonymously by Mr John Williamson, Minister of Inveresk. Hog's preface gave ample recommendation. In addition, he manifestly referred to what he regarded as the legalist tendency in Reformed doctrine, when he wrote :—" Yet his (Antichrist's) wounds are cured, and he recovers new strength and spirits, through a darkening of the glorious gospel and perversion thereof by anti-evangelical errors and heresies. That the tares of such errors are sown in the Reformed Churches, and by men who profess Reformed faith, is beyond debate . . . and this renders the essays for the further diffusion of evangelical light the more necessary and seasonable." <sup>1</sup> Boston has a valuable note <sup>2</sup> in the *Memoirs* to the effect that the appearance of the new edition created a sensation, chiefly in Fife, where discussions about the conditionality of grace had been going on for a time. When criticism became very pronounced, and with a pamphlet-war raging, Hog felt obliged to reply in " An Explication of Passages Excepted Against in the Marrow of Modern Divinity," published in 1719.

This pamphlet sets out the points raised <sup>3</sup> in the early stages of the " Marrow " Controversy. In the order of Hog's reply, these are as follows :—1. The book is a compilation of the writings of eminent divines, and that fact is warrant for orthodoxy. The

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 154, 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> " Explication of Passages," Edinburgh, 1719 ; p. 3 for 1.

criticism received is tantamount to disrespect to the Reformation Fathers. 2. It has been objected that the “Marrow” does not allow a due place for fear of punishment and hope of reward as elements in a believer’s obedience, and indeed secludes them from gospel obedience. The reply is that the nature of man bears out, and Scripture declares, that a due, yet subordinate regard has to be had to these ; and the “Marrow” does not omit this aspect. 3. To call the law a thief, a murderer of the Son of God, something that has lost its rights, is to use harsh and unbecoming language. The evident reply is that the epithets are Luther’s. 4. There is much in the book that is Antinomian in tendency. This is cleared by passages cited, and by a reference back to Luther :—“But that Mr Luther was free from that crime, his writings do abundantly testify ; and no sound Protestant, for what I know, did ever blacken him therewith.” 5. The “Marrow” is blamed for defining faith in terms which import assurance, thus :—“Be verily persuaded in your heart that Christ is yours, and that ye shall have life and salvation by Him.” Hog’s incorrect reply is that this is not a definition of saving faith, but an exhortation to renewal for an exercised Christian. 6. The author is taxed for asserting universal redemption as to purchase—“Go and tell every man without exception that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him.” The reply points out that there are proper conditions—“if he will take Him and accept of His righteousness”—and that the commission is, “Go and preach the gospel to every creature.” Assertions

“Explication of Passages,” p. 8 for 2 ; p. 9 for 3 ; p. 12 for 4 ; p. 13 for 5 ; p. 14 for 6 ; p. 15 for 7.

of particular redemption, to be found throughout the book, must be taken with these to clear the author.

7. That the "Marrow" speaks contemptuously of law is commented. For example, a passage like this puts it beyond a doubt :—" I will be bold to bid Moses with his Tables . . . and all men with their works hold their peace." Again the reply names Luther and his references here to law, as it is a matter of justification.

The gravamen of the charges against the book must have been Antinomianism. A pamphlet by Hog<sup>1</sup> (1719) gives a selection of passages clearing the charge. These are in brief : " The law doth not only command the binding of lust, but forbids also the being of lust ; yet, so is not man free from his part ; no, though strength to obey be lost, yet man having lost it by his default, the obligation to obedience remains ; " " the Lord may justly require obedience at all men's hands by virtue of that Covenant which was made with them in Adam." Further, the confutation of Antinomianism is its very definition, taken from the book :—" I can rejoice evermore in Christ, as the apostle exhorts me, and live merrily, though I be never so vile or sinful a creature." The law of Christ is asserted to be " an eternal rule of righteousness for all men of all nations, and at all times, etc. With this sweet difference betwixt the Covenant of Works and Grace, that the one beareth, Do and live ; but the other, Live and do, etc."

<sup>1</sup> " Some few of many Passages, collected from the Marrow of Modern Divinity, for clearing it from the Charge of Antinomian Licentiousness," pp. 4. Cf. "The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected," p. 137 ; also, Works, VII., pp. 181, 205, 234, 305-307, 235.



As to saving faith, Hog adds this passage from the "Marrow":—"That true faith is produced by the secret power of God by little and little, so that sometimes a true believer himself neither knows the time when, nor the manner how it was wrought . . . from faith of adherence to faith of evidence." The further comment is:—"Sure, this is not a placing the essence of faith in such an assurance as secludeth all doubting." One must suggest that here the author describes an exceptional case. If it be a general statement, then it has to be taken with what is discussed in the Synod sermon.

From the data that have been merely set out, one turns now to the charges preferred systematically in Principal Hadow's Synod sermon of April, 1719, preached at St Andrews and before the Synod of Fife. The text was 1 John v. 11 and 12, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." The title, "The Record of God, and Duty of Faith,"<sup>1</sup> directs to the interest of the topic.

The Principal begins with an analysis of saving faith. He finds that it consists in an assent of the mind, then an accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ for justification, sanctification, and eternal life. There is another element, the faith of assurance, whereby a believer is persuaded of his particular interest in Christ, his Mediator, that his sins are pardoned, that he has interest in eternal life, and will certainly be saved through Christ. This knowledge and persuasion are attainable, and it is a believer's duty, for his comfort and the best perform-

<sup>1</sup> "The Record of God, and Duty of Faith," Edinburgh, 1719.

ance of duty, to seek after it. Yet it may be queried if this be the essential act of justifying faith, immediately proposed to sinners in the first message of the gospel.

The Principal answers that this is a fruit and consequent, but not an essential of saving faith. The experience of many believers who have not attained thereto must be recognised. Then, there is the Scripture passage, which tells of those who fear the Lord and obey the voice of His servant, and yet walk in darkness and have not light, Isaiah l. 10. Out of justice to valid experience, the Principal blames the "Mallow" for defining faith in terms which import assurance.

The following gives his case in detail. The "Mallow" introduces Evangelista, a gospel Minister, explaining the nature and terms of the Covenant of Grace, in opposition to the Law, or Covenant of Works, and saying "that in the Covenant of Grace there is not any condition or law to be performed on man's part by himself; no, there is no more for him to do, but only to know and believe that Christ hath done all for him."<sup>1</sup> Applying this to the case of Neophitus, Evangelista adds:—"Here ye are to work nothing, here ye are to do nothing, here ye are to render nothing unto God, but only to receive the treasure, which is Jesus Christ, and apprehend Him in your heart by faith.—Again, nothing cometh betwixt, but faith only, apprehending Christ in the promise.—Wherefore, as Paul and Silas said to the jailor, so say I unto you, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved': that is, be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by Him,

<sup>1</sup> The Record, Hadow, p. 25.

that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, He did it for you.”<sup>1</sup> The Principal calls attention to a marginal note against this passage — “A definition of faith.”

Making his deductions he proceeds : that the faith thus considered is justifying faith, and not any consequent thereof ; and that the accepted acts of saving faith are all made into a sinner’s persuading himself of his particular interest in Christ. The Principal finds that the object of saving faith is— “Jesus Christ is yours, and you shall be saved by Him ; whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind He did it for you.”<sup>2</sup> The personal act answering to this is a firm persuasion thereof, and the foundation of it, a universal redemption as to purchase. Further to the same : Neophitus asks, “Hath such a one as I any warrant to believe in Christ ? ” *i.e.*, to persuade myself that Christ is mine, as the Principal extends it. Evangelista answers :—“God in Christ, of his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant unto them all ; that whosoever of them all shall believe in this His Son shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Evangelista then quotes the words of St Mark xvi. 15, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” “That is,” he says, “go and tell every man without exception that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him, and if he will take Him and accept His righteousness, he shall have Him.” One other relevant quotation concludes :—“For as much as the Holy Scripture speaketh to all in general, none of us ought to distrust himself, but believe that it doth belong particularly to himself.” The Principal makes

<sup>1</sup> The Record, Hadow, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

comment here :—"How can Ministers of the Gospel tell every man, as the truth of God, that Christ is dead for him, without the supposition of an universal redemption? The author's opinion clearly is that there is this general warrant, and that particular application thereof is made by the sinner's believing, or being verily persuaded, that it doth belong particularly to himself." <sup>1</sup>

Next, Principal Hadow summarises what he considers unsound and blameworthy in the "Marrow." These following passages keep very close to the Principal's own form of words <sup>2</sup> :—1. He thinks the author faulty in making assurance to be essential to saving faith; yea, in making the very essence and formal nature of justifying, saving faith to be a man's persuading and assuring himself of his particular interest in Christ, and the benefits of the new Covenant. 2. He thinks him culpable in maintaining that every man, upon the first proposal of the gospel, is by call and command bound to believe directly and immediately that Christ is his, that his sins are pardoned, and that he has a right to eternal life by Him. 3. He considers him unsound to build this upon the foundation of a universal redemption, and gift and promise made unto all men. 4. Believers' assurance, or their knowing that they have eternal life, presupposes their believing on the Son of God, and therefore is a consequent of faith and not the essence of it. 5. The essential acts of saving faith are required of all that hear the gospel, by that call and command that hath salvation annexed to it, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"; and every one, to whom the record

<sup>1</sup> The Record, Hadow, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28 ff.

of God concerning the way of salvation is proposed, becomes thereby bound, with a direct act of faith, to believe and betake himself unto the way of salvation for relief. But the act of assurance is not required of every one that hears the gospel ; neither is every man, to whom the way of salvation is proposed, thereby bound directly to believe that Christ is his, that he hath remission of sins, and that eternal life belongs to him in particular. For this is not true of every one of the hearers of the gospel, there being many who have not the Son of God, nor eternal life through Him. Wherefore, this assurance is not essential to that faith which is required by the gospel command, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The doctrine tends to discourage such, who may be true believers, but through temptation and desertion cannot attain unto an assurance of their particular interest in Christ. 6. It tends to the encouraging of self-deceiving hypocrites in the vain conceit they entertain that all is well with them. They will readily conclude from the good opinion they have of themselves that they are true believers, and thereby be further hardened in their presumption.

More than any other who took part in the " Marrow " Controversy, the Principal set the author's assertions to the test of the accepted Standards. This will fittingly introduce number 7. This doctrine is not to be received into this Church, because it is inconsistent with what is in the Confession of Faith. For in chapter xiv. 2, the principal acts of saving faith are said to be " accepting, receiving, and resting on Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life " ; and in xiv. 3, that " this faith in many grows up to the attainment of a full

assurance through Christ," where this assurance is plainly made a fruit and consequent of saving faith, and not an essential act ; and in xviii. 3, that "this infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be partaker of it." According to the Confession, therefore, the deduction is that a man may be a true believer, and yet want assurance.

The Synod sermon concluded with an appendix, the sum of which is thus indicated ; that, as the Confession denies assurance to be the essence of saving faith, so it no less disowns all universalism, whether with respect to the Decree of Election, or the undertakings of the Son, as Surety ; or with respect to His purchase, or the absolute promises of saving grace. All these it restricts to a certain number of mankind appointed unto eternal life.

### THE APPENDIX <sup>1</sup>

#### THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

Chapter iii. 6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, fore-ordained all means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any others redeemed by Christ,

#### ASSERTIONS IN "THE MARROW OF MODERN DIVINITY"

"Jesus Christ in the Covenant of Redemption stood as Surety, not for the elect only, but for fallen mankind, for the whole lost world. He engaged in their place to satisfy justice for them, and thereupon they are absolved from all their sins, and therefore are virtually and really justified for eternity, in Christ."

"According to this undertaking the Son of God by His death did take away the sins of the world, and procured their discharge, which is pardon purchased ; and also pur-

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<sup>1</sup> The Record, Hadow, p. 35.

effectually called, justified, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

Chapter vii. 3. In the Covenant of Grace, God freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, His Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe.

Chapter viii. 1. Unto Christ, the Mediator, God did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. 5. The Lord Jesus hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him. 8. To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, He doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey.

Chapter x. 1. All whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call.

Chapter xi. 4. God from all eternity did decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fulness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification ; never-

chased for them all the grace and benefits of the New Covenant. He is bound to save all, He came to save all sinners, though He doth not save all."

"Christ the Saviour and salvation, by Him are freely purchased, freely offered, freely given : no conditions here at all, no condition of Christ's coming to save sinners, no condition of this offer. God by His promises declares the right of sinners unto this free gift, yea gives an absolute right to all that hear the gospel."

"So that they have all a right to Christ and all His benefits by absolute promise and disposition ; and confirmed by the seal of the Sacraments. This is a proclaimed, intimated, and published right ; a sure right, having no nullity in it ; a free, absolute, constant, and universal right to all that hear it, even to the unregenerate and unbelieving. For the Lord stands engaged to perform all, so that there wants nothing to your title, but your receiving it. God gives absolute promises, but He addeth this, Unless ye believe, ye shall not be established."

"Yet even this condition itself is promised, the absolute promises of giving the new heart, life, light, and faith, are made to sinners as sinners. For the Lord requires nothing of men, but what He hath first promised to fulfil, do, and work in them. Nevertheless, unbelief may stop the execution of an absolute and peremptory promise ; by which means the Lord may in justice make men know the breach of His promise."

"God conveys the benefits of the New Covenant by way of absolute promises to assure us of the certainty of the things promised. They give right and claim absolutely, but the fruits of them, the things promised,

theless they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.

Chapter xv. 3. Repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none can expect pardon without it.

are given upon condition of faith. The promise in itself, in as far as it conferreth the right, is absolute ; but as to the event it is conditional, and without believing it shall not be fulfilled."

"The Lord's absolute promises declare the sinner's claim and title, but not what he will do ; though He hath taken the work on Himself and said, A new heart will I give him. The absolute promises give right unto all, in respect of external legal destination ; but they are only to the children of the promise, in respect of divine intention, intending it for their good. Faith justifies only declaratively by letting a sinner see what he is in Jesus Christ, and what in respect of the gospel, which declares to him remission of sins. And therefore every sinner is really and actually pardoned and justified before the gospel-promise be declared unto him, and before he believe it."

The Principal concludes on a challenging note :—  
 "When the patrons of this scheme shall be pleased to explain more fully their meaning and attempt its reconciliation, either with the revelation and attributes of God, or with the Confession of Faith, signed by all Ministers of this Church, or even with itself, what they shall advance may be considered."<sup>1</sup>

This famous sermon, which was published at the desire of the Synod, was followed up by a complaint about "Marrow" literature to the General Assembly of the same year, 1719. The result was that the Court appointed a committee "to enquire into the publishing and spreading of books and pamphlets, tending to the diffusing of that condemned proposi-

<sup>1</sup> The Record, Hadow, p. 39.



tion (the Auchterarder), and promoting a scheme of opinions relative thereto, which are inconsistent with our Confession of Faith ; and that the recommenders of such books and pamphlets, or the errors therein contained, whether by word or print, be called before them to answer for their conduct in such recommendations.”<sup>1</sup> Boston’s comment is that “the committee sufficiently showed their zeal, but all upon one side, namely, to preserve the doctrine from the mixture of Antinomianism, which the hue and cry was now raised about.”<sup>2</sup>

The committee did its work in two sections. One sitting at St Andrews prepared excerpts from the challenged books and prints ; the Edinburgh section reviewed these, and also did the work of interrogating certain suspected Ministers. Mr James Hog, Carnock, Mr Alexander Hamilton, Airth, Mr James Brisbane, Stirling, and Mr John Warden, Gargunnock, “all noted preachers of the doctrine of free grace,”<sup>3</sup> as Boston describes them, were called before the Edinburgh section of the committee.

Details of Mr Hog’s examination are to be found in the Ettrick Memoirs. Boston took these from a manuscript prepared by Hog himself. The interrogation proceeded thus :—Did he own himself to be the author of the preface to the last edition of the “ Marrow ” ? Yes, and he detailed the circumstances of how the book had come unexpectedly to hand, how he complied with a request to publish, and wrote the preface ; that the book had been a blessing, and that there was a record of its value by that noted saint, Fraser of Brea.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts of Assembly, pp. 531, 532.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs, p. 347.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 347, 348.

The work of the committee so recommended itself to the General Assembly of 1720 that by its Act (Act V. of the twentieth of May) it condemned "The Marrow of Modern Divinity." Boston regarded Principal Hadow as "the spring of that black Act." <sup>1</sup>

The Principal had developed one point, referred to in the "Explication of Passages," namely, the act of faith, and had added in the appendix of his sermon his finding with regard to the extent of redemption. The work of the committee, as shown in the Act of Assembly, was an exhaustive official examination of the doctrines of the "Marrow." The various sections of the Act will make this clear.

Act of Assembly <sup>2</sup> *re* "The Marrow," Edinburgh, May 20, 1720. Session 9. The General Assembly having had under their consideration the book, entitled "The Marrow of Modern Divinity," reprinted at Edinburgh, anno 1718, with an ample recommendation prefixed thereto, which they found was dispersed, and come into the hands of many of the people; and having had laid before them the following passages, collected out of the said book, by a committee for preserving the purity of doctrine in this Church, appointed by the Commission of the late General Assembly: the tenor whereof follows:—

#### CONCERNING THE NATURE OF FAITH

Page 118. "There is no more for him to do, but only to know and believe that Christ hath done all for him." <sup>3</sup> Page 119. "This, then, is perfect

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> Acts of Assembly, p. 534.

<sup>3</sup> Works, VII., p. 254.

righteousness,—only to know and believe that Jesus Christ is now gone to the Father, and sitteth at His right hand, not as a Judge, but as made unto you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption ; wherefore, as Paul and Silas said to the jailor, so say I unto you, ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,’ that is, be verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by Him ; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, He did it for you.”<sup>1</sup> Page 120. “ For as much as the Holy Scripture speaketh to all in general, none of us ought to distrust himself, but believe that it doth belong particularly to himself.”<sup>2</sup> The same is asserted on pages 121, 122, 123, 124, 131, 136, 137, 175, 176, 177, and in many other places of the book. This notion of saving faith appears contrary to Scripture, Isaiah l. 10 ; Romans viii. 16 ; 1 John v. 13 ; and to Confess. cap. xviii. 1, 3, 4, and to Larger Catechism, Quest. 81, 172. All which passages show that assurance is not of the essence of faith, whereas the passages cited from the “ Marrow ” appear to assert the contrary, making that saving faith commanded in the gospel a man’s persuasion that Christ is his, and died for him, and that whosoever hath not this persuasion or assurance hath not answered the gospel call, nor is a true believer.

#### OF UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT AND PARDON

Page 108. “ Christ hath taken upon Him the sins of all men.”<sup>3</sup> Page 119. “ The Father hath made a

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, That whosoever of them all shall believe in His Son shall not perish," (*i.e.*, whosoever believes or is persuaded that Christ is his, for this must be the sense according to the former passages). "Hence it was that Christ said to his disciples, 'Go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven,' that is, go and tell every man without exception that here is good news for him, Christ is dead for him. Even so our good King, the Lord of heaven and earth, hath, for the obedience and desert of our good Brother, Jesus Christ, pardoned all our sins." <sup>1</sup> To the same purpose pages 127, 128. Here is asserted a universal redemption as to purchase, contrary to St John x. 15, 27, 28, 29; and xv. 13 and 17; Titus ii. 14; Confess. cap. iii. 6, cap. viii. 8; Larger Catechism, Quest. 59.

#### HOLINESS NOT NECESSARY TO SALVATION

From page 150 to 153. "And if the law say good works must be done, and the commandment must be kept, if thou wilt obtain salvation, then answer you and say, 'I am already saved before thou camest; and therefore I have no need of thy presence,—Christ is my righteousness, my treasure and my work. I confess, O law! that I am neither godly nor righteous, but this yet I am sure of, that He is godly and righteous for me.' " <sup>2</sup> Page 185. "Good works may rather be called a believer's walking in the way of eternal happiness, than the way itself." <sup>3</sup> This doctrine tends to slacken people's diligence in the study of holiness, contrary to Hebrews

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 262, 263.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297-302.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

xii. 14 ; 2 Thessalonians, ii. 13 ; Ephesians, ii. 10 ; Isaiah xxxv. 8 ; James ii. 20 ; Confess. cap. xiii. 1 ; Larger Catechism, Quest. 32 ; Confess. cap. xv. 2.

FEAR OF PUNISHMENT AND HOPE OF REWARD NOT  
ALLOWED TO BE MOTIVES OF A BELIEVER'S  
OBEDIENCE

Page 181. "Would you not have believers to eschew evil and do good for fear of hell or hope of heaven? Answer, No, indeed,—for so far forth as they do so, their obedience is but slavish." <sup>1</sup> A great deal more to this purpose is to be seen, pages 175, 179, 180, 182, 183, 184, and appears contrary to Psalm xlv. 2 ; Psalm cxix. 4 and 6 ; Exodus xx. 2 ; James i. 25 ; and ii. 8-12 ; 1 Timothy iv. 8 ; Colossians iii. 24 ; Hebrews xi. 6 and 26 ; Revelation ii. 10 ; 2 Corinthians v. 9-11 ; Hebrews xii. 2, 28 and 29 ; 2 Peter iii. 14 ; Confess. cap. xvi. 2 and 6.

THAT THE BELIEVER IS NOT UNDER THE LAW AS A  
RULE OF LIFE

Page 150. "As the law is the Covenant of Works, you are wholly and altogether set free from it." <sup>2</sup> And page 151. "You are now set free, both from the commanding and condemning power of the Covenant of Works." <sup>3</sup> Page 216. "You will yield obedience to the law of Christ, not only without respect, either to what the law of works promiseth or threateneth, but also without having respect to what the law of Christ either promiseth or threateneth ; and this is to serve the Lord without fear of any penalty, which either the law of works or the law

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

of Christ threateneth,"<sup>1</sup> St Luke i. 74. See also pages 5, 153, 180, 156, 157, 163, 199, 209, 210, contrary to Scripture, Exodus xx. 2 ; St Matthew v. 17 and following ; Romans iii. 21 ; and xiii. 9 ; James i. 25 ; and ii. 8, 10-12 ; and Confess. cap. xix. 5 and 6.

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The six Antinomian paradoxes<sup>2</sup> are fenced and defended by applying to them that distinction of the Law of Works and the Law of Christ. Pages 198, 199. 1. "A believer is not under the law, but is altogether delivered from it." 2. "A believer doth not commit sin." 3. "The Lord can see no sin in a believer." 4. "The Lord is not angry with a believer for his sins." 5. "The Lord doth not chastise a believer for his sins." 6. "A believer hath no cause, neither to confess his sins, nor to crave pardon at the hand of God for them, neither to fast, nor mourn, nor humble himself before the Lord for them."

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### *Expressions in the "Marrow"*

Page 192. "A minister that dares not persuade sinners to believe their sins are pardoned, before he sees their lives reformed, for fear they should take more liberty to sin, is ignorant of the mystery of faith."<sup>3</sup> And page 27. "Christ undertook to suffer under the penalty that lay upon man to have undergone."<sup>4</sup> And page 117. "The Covenant of Works was twice made ; first with man, and a second time God was on both sides."<sup>5</sup> Page 115. "The law

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 359, 361. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 347. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

practised his whole tyranny upon the Son of God, and because it did so horribly and cursedly sin against his God, it is cursed and arraigned ; and as a thief and cursed murderer of the Son of God loseth all his right, and deserveth to be condemned ; the law, therefore, is bound, dead and crucified to me.” <sup>1</sup> Page 126. “ Whosoever is married to Christ, and so in Him by faith, he is as acceptable to God the Father, as Christ Himself.” <sup>2</sup> Page 127. “ And so shall the love and favour of God be as deeply insinuated into you, as it is into Christ Himself.” <sup>3</sup> Page 144. “ Whence it must needs follow, that you cannot be damned, except Christ be damned with you ; neither can Christ be saved, except ye be saved with Him.” <sup>4</sup> Pages 145, 146. “ Say unto Christ with bold confidence, I give to Thee, my dear Husband, my unbelief, my mistrust, my pride, my arrogancy, my ambition, my wrath, my anger, my envy, my covetousness, my evil thoughts, affections and desires : I make one bundle of those, and all my other offences, and give them unto Thee,” 2 Corinthians v. 21 ; “ And thus was Christ made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” <sup>5</sup> Page 207. “ Nor yet as touching your justification and eternal salvation will He love you ever a whit the less, though you commit ever so many or great sins.” <sup>6</sup>

These are collected out of many other exceptionable positions contained in that book, which for brevity's sake are omitted.

And the General Assembly, having had the said passages, and several others, read to them from the

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 289.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

said book, and having compared them with the texts of Holy Scripture, articles of our Confession of Faith, and of the Larger Catechism of this Church above cited,—The General Assembly found that the said passages and quotations, which relate to the five several heads of doctrine above mentioned, are contrary to the Holy Scriptures, our Confession of Faith, and Catechisms ; and that the distinction of the law, as it is the law of Works, and as it is the law of Christ, as the author applies it, in order to fence and defend the six Antinomian paradoxes above written, is altogether groundless ; and that the other expressions above set down, excerpted out of the said book, are exceedingly harsh and offensive. And therefore the General Assembly do hereby strictly prohibit and discharge all the ministers of this Church, either by preaching, writing, or printing, to recommend the said book, or in discourse to say anything in favour of it ; but, on the contrary, they are hereby enjoined and required to warn and exhort their people, in whose hands the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same.

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By the wish of the local Brethren, the Assembly's Act was brought before the Presbytery of Selkirk ; and after discussion it was decided to lay it before the October meeting of the Synod. The weight of opinion must have been against it at Selkirk ; for Boston was appointed to state to the Synod what was offensive in the Act. However, as matters turned out, this representation was quite borne down.

Returning home somewhat disconsolate after his



defeat, and in conversation with Messrs Wilson and Davidson, his intimate friends, Boston received a suggestion that pointed to a hopeful way of redress. It was Mr Gabriel Wilson who advised "that a letter should be written to Mr James Hog showing what had passed in that judicatory, and our readiness to concur with others to seek redress therein of the Assembly itself immediately."<sup>1</sup> The letter, which moved for the historic Representation and all that followed from it in Scottish ecclesiastical history, was sent from Ettrick Manse. The reply, received by a letter from Mr Ralph Erskine, Minister of Dunfermline, and from Mr Hog, expressed readiness to concur because of the injury done to truth by the Act of the Assembly. In the month of January, 1721, a form of address was received from the Brethren in Fife, but this did not satisfy the three Borderers. At a suggestion made, the Minister of Ettrick prepared another; and it was this form that was laid before the Assembly.

The first meeting of the Representers took place at the end of February and in the house of Mr William Wardrobe, apothecary, Edinburgh. The list of attenders is Boston's, and contains these interesting names: Mr James Kid, Minister of South Queensferry, Mr Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of Portmoak, Mr Ralph Erskine, Minister of the First Charge, Dunfermline, and Mr James Wardlaw, his Colleague, Mr William Wilson, Minister at Perth, Mr James Bathgate, Minister of Orwell, and the three from the Borders, Messrs Gabriel Wilson, Henry Davidson, and Thomas Boston,—a sederunt of nine.

The meeting was devoted mostly to prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, pp. 352, 353.

After close consideration of the Act, decision was taken to make representation to the next Assembly ; and Boston's draft was committed to Mr Ebenezer Erskine and the Brethren in the district for revision and preparation of the final form. Another meeting was appointed for the end of March, and at Edinburgh.

There are two notes given of the second meeting. Mr Hamilton, Airth, and Messrs Brisbane and Muir, Stirling, and Mr Warden, Gargunnock, did not accept invitation to attend, and their absence proved a great discouragement. The business consisted solely of approving of the completed Representation.

The third meeting, convened for the evening before the opening of Assembly, brought together a considerable company, but not all in agreement on policy. Mr Hog, whose absence up to this point had been thought desirable, was now free to attend. Mr John Warden and Mr Alexander Moncrieff of Culfargie, new-comers to the deliberations, suggested the expediency of modifying the text of the Representation, of holding a conference with the leaders of the Assembly, and of adopting the plan that a few should sign, while others were to make it their task to manage affairs in the Assembly. Boston was thoroughly opposed to the last suggestion. Messrs Wilson and Davidson suspected it as a subtle scheme to defeat measures. Boston could agree, provided a representation was to be made, to a modification of the text of the document, which was pressed for by Mr Kid ; and after many of the Brethren had left the meeting, its author did reluctantly agree, but expressed his fears for the outcome. Accordingly, this was done, and the Representation duly signed. Mr John

Bonar, Minister of Torphichen, and Mr John Williamson, Minister of Inveresk, were the additional signatories at this meeting. Mr William Hunter, Minister of Lilliesleaf, signed in the Church, and just before the Representation was handed in.

It is interesting to note the associations of the men who were brought together at this time. In the order of their signatures, Mr James Hog stands first. He was a member of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, the author of the Preface, and of many pamphlets in the "Marrow" Controversy. Next came Mr Thomas Boston, the spiritual son of Mr Henry Erskine, the man who introduced the "Marrow," and who was the scribe to the Representers. Mr John Bonar had place in keeping with his zeal for evangelical doctrine, a legacy from his mother, the Lady of Wester Kilgraston, Perthshire. Mr John Williamson who signed, afterwards carried on his interest to the extent of preparing the second part of the "Marrow" for publication. Mr James Kid, a licentiate of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, was a man of evangelical sympathy ; and likewise also Mr Gabriel Wilson who had suggested the Representation. The brothers, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, were endowed with a large measure of the evangelical spirit of their father. Next in order came Mr James Wardlaw, the Colleague in every sense of the ministry at Dunfermline. The evangelical tendencies of Mr Henry Davidson were well-known. Mr James Bathgate signed, and afterwards vindicated his position in a Communion sermon, preached at Orwell. For this he was called to account by the Synod of Fife. Mr William Hunter, an evangelical, and son-in-law of James Hog, completed the list. Messrs Wilson and

Moncrieff, Associate Presbyters to be, did not sign the Representation.

The text of the Representation, taken from Struthers's "History of Scotland," Vol. I., page 498, is given almost in full.

To the Right Reverend, etc., the Representation and Petition of us, undersubscribing Ministers of the Gospel,

Humbly sheweth,

That whereas it is the unquestionable duty of all the members, Ministers, and Assemblies of this Church, to endeavour in their several capacities the preservation of the purity of doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures, and in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, agreeable thereunto, that the same may be faithfully submitted to succeeding generations ; We find ourselves obliged in conscience, with all due deference, to lay some things relative to that and some matters which are grievous to us, before the venerable Assembly, whose province it is, in a special manner, to maintain the truths of the gospel, and to take care that everything in the House of the God of Heaven be moulded in a conformity to His will, and the pattern He hath shewed us in His Holy Word.

We are fully persuaded that, although the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" ; yet there is such a propensity in the corrupt nature of man to licentiousness and profanity, that he is apt to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness ; whence have proceeded these monstrous opinions of some,—that the law is not a rule of life to believers,—

that holiness is not necessary to salvation,—and the like ; all which our hearts do abhor, as egregious blasphemy against our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, making Him the minister of sin ; and, therefore, we cannot but own it to be commendable zeal in the members, Ministers, and Assemblies of this Church, to endeavour the stifling of such monstrous brats in the birth, whensoever they do really begin to appear.

But, withal, on the other hand, we are no less persuaded that, in point of seeking righteousness and salvation, there is such a bias in the same corrupt nature towards the old way of the first Covenant that men seek the same naturally not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law ; the which bias of the heart of man, in opposition to the gospel-doctrine, known only by a new revelation after the Fall, being more subtile, and not so easily discerned as the other, which is opposite to the law, the knowledge of which was impressed on man's mind in creation ; there is an evident necessity of guarding equally, at least, against the latter as against the former, lest the purity of gospel-doctrine suffer, and man frustrate the grace of God, seeking righteousness by the law. And since we do apprehend that the late General Assembly of this Church has not sufficiently adverted to the danger on that side, but that by their Act, entitled, “ Act concerning a book, entitled, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*,” dated at Edinburgh, May 20, 1720, gospel truth has suffered, and it is likely will suffer more in the rising and succeeding generations, unless a remedy be timely provided ; we beg leave, with all humility and deference, to lay before this venerable Assembly, some (of the

many) things, which in the said Act are stumbling to us and many others in the Church.

And, *first*, it is surprising and exceedingly grievous unto us, that by the said Act, the following position is condemned ; namely, " That as the law is the Covenant of Works, believers are altogether and wholly set free from it ; set free, both from the commanding and condemning power of the Covenant of Works." We acknowledge and profess we look upon our freedom, as believers in Christ, from the Covenant of Works, or the law as that Covenant, to be the chief branch of that precious liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, and in which the eternal salvation of our souls is wrapped up. We know no commands of the Covenant of Works, but that command of perfect obedience, under the pain of the curse. And if the law, as to believers, be divested of its promise of life, and threatening of death, (which superadded to its commands made it a Covenant of Works) as it really is, since they are not under it to be thereby justified or condemned, we cannot comprehend how it continues any longer to be a Covenant of Works to them, or such as to have a commanding power over them, that Covenant-form of it being done away in Christ, with respect to believers. And to suppose that a man cannot be under the law as a rule of life, unless he be under the Covenant of Works, which the Act above specified plainly imports, is contrary to our Confession of Faith, chapter xix. 6, and Larger Catechism, Question anent " the use of the moral law to the regenerate," which bear, " That although believers be not under the law, as a Covenant of Works, yet it is of use to them as a rule of life, or as the rule of their obedience."

*Secondly.* Of the same dismal tendency we apprehend to be the declaring of that distinction of the law, as it is the law of works, and as it is the law of Christ, as the author applies it, pages 198, 199, to be altogether groundless. We find the author doth there apply this distinction, so as to show that believers are not under the law, as it is the law of works, though under the law, as it is the law of Christ. And he tells us in express words, page 6, That the law of works is as much as to say, the Covenant of Works ; the which Covenant (saith he) the Lord made with all mankind in Adam before his fall.<sup>1</sup> To what purpose, then, can this distinction thus applied be rejected, and declared altogether groundless, but to stake down believers under the Covenant of Works, as in the former head, and contrary to the great design of the gospel-contrivance, to direct them to an obedience upon which they may boast, since by the law of works boasting is not excluded? It were much to be desired, that another method had been taken to expose the Antinomian paradoxes, viz., “That a believer doth not commit sin,—the Lord can see no sin in a believer,” and the like, than by condemning the distinction of the law above mentioned as applied by the author, to assert, in effect, that believers sin against the law, (or Covenant of Works), while in the meantime, according to the Holy Scriptures, and our Confession of Faith, they are not under it, which exemption, we are fully satisfied, carrieth no prejudice unto the indispensable obligation of the creature to the strictest obedience, flowing from the unalterable authority of the Lawgiver, and the nature of the precepts themselves. Nevertheless, we

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 171.

firmly believe that no small portion of the believer's safety and comfort turns upon the following points :—namely, that the guilt of believers' sins is not such as the guilt of their sins, who are under the Covenant of Works ; that God doth not look upon the sins of believers, after their union with Christ, as breaches of the Covenant of Works ; that when in His anger against them for their sins He smites them, yet He doth not proceed against them in the way of that Covenant, and that in their confessions, and addresses for pardon, fastings, mournings, humiliations, they ought to eye Him as their Father in Jesus Christ, and not as their wrathful Judge, proceeding against them according to the law (or Covenant) of Works. All which truths seem to us to be buried in the ruins of the above-mentioned distinction of the law, as applied by the author of the " Marrow."

*Thirdly.* It is astonishing to us to find that part of the " Marrow," which lies from page 150 to 153 condemned " in cumulo," as contrary to the Scriptures, and Confession of Faith ; while we must frankly own, if we understood the gospel, the forecited pages contain a bundle of sweet and pleasant gospel-truths, which, instead of slackening people's diligence in the study of holiness, as is alleged in the Act, do discover the true spring of evangelical obedience to the holy law as a rule ; particularly in the Assembly's Act, we find the believer's plea, in the case of justification in answer to the demands of the law, cut off and condemned ; viz., " I am already saved before thou camest, therefore I have no need of thy presence." Here the book adds what the Assembly's Act omits, namely, " For in Christ I have all things at once, neither need I anything more



that is necessary unto salvation," then proceeds, "Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, and my work ; I confess, O law ! that I am neither godly nor righteous ; but yet this I am sure of that He is godly and righteous for me." <sup>1</sup> In which terms, that blessed and famous reformer, Martin Luther, in his strenuous and courageous defence of the evangelical doctrine of justification, asserted the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus as our Surety, to be the only righteousness on which we may rely, in the case of justification before God ; the which that great champion for Jesus Christ maintained against the Antichristian world with astonishing success in his time. We do believe that the law, or Covenant of Works, being broken, had a twofold demand upon all mankind ; without a valid answer to each of which, sustained by the Judge of all the earth, no man can see the Lord : the one, the demand of satisfaction to justice for sin ; the other, the demand of obedience. And as we have no plea in answer to its former demand, but the sufferings of Jesus Christ our Surety, so we have none, we dare pretend none, in answer to the latter demand of it, but that which stands here condemned ; in regard, that as, in the language of the law, there is no obtaining of salvation but by works, (for the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live in them) so it acknowledgeth no good works, no keeping of the commandments, no godliness or righteousness, but what is in every way perfect. And we conceive, that believers being united to Christ, this their plea is sustained in the court of heaven, as the plea of the Surety's having paid the debt for them, whereby the

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 300-302.

demand which the law makes upon them for works, if they will obtain salvation, is cut off, they being appointed to obtain salvation another way, namely, by our Lord Jesus Christ : yea, being already actually, though not completely saved, not according to the works of righteousness which they have done, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; of which salvation, conferred on them through Jesus Christ our Saviour, their deliverance from the law as a Covenant of Works, and consequently from its demands aforesaid, is a chief part.

*Fourthly.* With respect to the passages concerning the nature of faith condemned by the foresaid Act :

1. It is grievous to us that thereby that act of faith, by which a person appropriates to himself what before lay in common in the gospel offer, and without which there can be no receiving and closing with Christ for salvation, is in effect excluded from the nature of faith, which, as we apprehend, is thereby turned into that general and doubtful faith, abjured in our National Covenant.

2. Whereas it is notour that our first reformers, and the body of Reformed divines since, have taught concerning the nature of faith, in the same strain as in the condemned passages, and thereby cut the sinews of Popery ; which doctrine of theirs, in the same manner of expression, stands in the Confessions of our Reformed Churches, and in the public standards of doctrine in this Church, before the year 1647, such as Confession 1560, the Helvetian Confession, received and approved by this Church, with exception only to holy days ; Calvin's Catechism, which was commonly annexed to Knox's Liturgie ; Mr John

Davidson's Catechism, approven and recommended by the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale anno 1599 ; as also that little Latin Catechism, annexed to the Rudiments so long taught in Scotland ; the famous and learned Mr Boyd of Trochrig's Commentary on the Ephesians, a work promoted and encouraged by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It seems to us no small disservice to the interest of religion, and a handle given the Papists against the Reformation, that by an Act of a General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that doctrine, or way of expressing it, is now condemned. And although we freely own that in latter times saving faith has been well described, especially in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the manner of speaking on that head is much altered from what some time was in use, yet we doubt not but the substance of the doctrine in that point is still the same, as will appear by comparing the above-mentioned Confession and Catechisms with the three Acts of Assembly, 1647 and 1648, receiving and approving the Westminster Confession and Catechisms ; in which it is expressly declared " that the said Confessions and Catechisms are in nothing contrary to the received doctrine of this church ; " which they would not have said, if they had not thought that receiving and resting on Christ for salvation did imply that assurance, whereby they ordinarily described before that time, and by which they understood, the fiducial act, or appropriating persuasion of faith ; and not that assurance treated of in the Westminster Confession, which is a complex one, full and clear, containing not only the assurance included in the direct act of faith, but also that which ariseth from spiritual sensation, and

rational argumentation ; for which see Confess. xviii. 2 and 3, where it is said " that the assurance of which they treat, is not only founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, but also the inward evidences of these graces, unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God. " This infallible assurance," adds the Confession, " doth not so belong to the essence of faith," etc. And therefore we are fully persuaded that the late Assembly had done more acceptable services to God, to this and other Reformed Churches, had they discovered the real agreement between the more ancient and modern ways of describing faith, than to condemn the former as erroneous ; whereby a heavy charge is laid upon our Reformers, this and other Reformed Churches, who generally have defined faith by assurance.

*Fifthly.* That the following passage is condemned, viz., " The Father hath made a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind, that whosoever of them shall believe in His Son shall not perish," is surprising to us ; when in the condemned passage itself, extracted forth of the sacred records, we read that deed of gift and grant, by which we understand no more than the revelation of the divine will in the Word, affording a warrant to offer Christ to all, and a warrant unto all to receive Him. This treatment of the said passage, seems to encroach upon the warrants aforesaid, and also upon sovereign grace, which hath made this grant, not to devils, but unto men, in terms than which none can be imagined more extensive.

Waving the consideration of the expressions,

judged by the Assembly exceedingly harsh and offensive ; since that which hath extorted this Representation from us is our concern for the truth, more than the manner of expressing it ; yet, seeing the interest of truth and of that condemned book are so much linked together, in this event one cannot but represent briefly the hard treatment we conceive this last to have also met with, when under the consideration of the late General Assembly ; and such we apprehend to be,

1. The heavy charge of maintaining that the believer is not under the law, as a rule of life, is inferred from the author's inserting the believers to be free from the law, as it is a Covenant of Works, as if the law could not be a rule of life, but as it is the Covenant of Works. One would rather think that the foresaid assertion of the author doth plainly import the believer to be under the law in some other sense ; and justice as well as charity obliges us to conceive the said other sense to be that of the law as a rule of life ; for as much as, in express terms, he hath declared the Ten Commandments to be the rule of life to a believer, page 5.<sup>1</sup>

2. The charge of maintaining holiness not to be necessary to salvation is fixed upon the author's teaching the believer to plead the obedience of Christ in answer to the law's demand of good works for obtaining salvation, of which before ; and upon his proposing his own judgment very modestly, as to the propriety of expression, with respect to the relation between good works and eternal happiness in these words, viz., " So that good works, as I conceive them, may rather be called a believer's walking in the way

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 169.

of eternal happiness, than the way itself." But how that doctrine can bear that inference that holiness is not necessary to salvation, or how it tends to slacken people's diligence in the study of holiness, we cannot comprehend ; for we can never grant that the believer's walking in the way of eternal happiness is not necessary to salvation, and that only the way itself is so. And yet after all the author doth not tenaciously insist on his own judgment aforesaid, as to the propriety of expression ; but immediately adds, " But, however, this one may assuredly conclude that the sum and substance, both of the way and of walking in the way, consists in the receiving of Jesus Christ by faith and in yielding obedience to His law." <sup>1</sup>

3. Fear of punishment and hope of reward, not allowed to be motives for a believer's obedience is inferred from that, the author would not have believers to eschew evil and do good, for fear of hell or hope of heaven ; as if hell only, and none of the fearful tokens of God's anger against His own children in this life, were to be in any sort reckoned punishments ; and heaven only, but none of the sweet tokens of His love bestowed upon them in the way of close walking with God, were to be reckoned rewards. We shall only add here that, for as much as it is evident to us from the author's words, page 183, relative to the hope of heaven, above-mentioned, that he understands by doing good for hope of heaven the doing it for hope of obtaining it by our own works and doings, we heartily approve of his position above specified in that sense.

4. We cannot but account it hard that, whereas

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 337.

there are in the Act about 27 quotations out of the book, they are all condemned without condescending upon words or propositions which the Assembly aims at in the quoted passages ; for verifying of which we refer to the Act itself, yea, so far as one can find, there are several of these quotations, which seem to us to contain nothing of what is charged upon them, as particularly upon the first head anent the nature of faith, pages 175, 176, 177 ; and upon the head of universal atonement, pages 127 and 128 ; and upon the fifth head anent the believer's not being under the law as a rule of life, pages 209 and 210.

5. It is also hard that the book is condemned, as denying the necessity of holiness to salvation, and the believer's being under the law as a rule of life, without making the least intimation that the one half of the said book, contained in the second volume, is an explication and application of the holy law in its Ten Commandments, not only to unbelievers, but also to believers themselves, for their direction and excitation to holiness of heart and life, and humiliation for their transgressions of it ; yea, and without that half of the book its being once under the consideration, either of the Assembly or Committee for preserving the purity of doctrine.

Although we do not account of the deed of the late General Assembly in this affair otherwise than as an oversight, nevertheless our hearts tremble to think of its native consequences, and what use in the present and succeeding generations may be made of the words of the Assembly's determination in the points of doctrine above-mentioned, and of their strictly prohibiting and discharging all the Ministers of this Church, either by preaching, writing, or

printing, to recommend the foresaid book ; and on the contrary enjoining and requiring them to warn and exhort their people, in whose hands the said book is, or may come, not to read or use the same ; a book remarkable for setting the difference between the law and the gospel, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, in a clear light ; and for directing to the true way of attaining gospel-holiness, by which it has recommended itself to the consciences of many judicious Ministers and Christians in the Church, holy and tender in their walk.

As the growing humour in this generation for turning that religion left among us unto a mere morality, which hath nothing but the matter common to it, with true holiness and gospel obedience, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, is too notour to escape your observation. So it is with grief of heart we must say that we conceive the above-mentioned Act of Assembly to have so opened the sluice to it, that if remedy be not timely provided, this matter must terminate in a confounding of the law and gospel, notwithstanding of our Confession of Faith and Catechisms witnessing against the same ; which has been the lot of other public standards of doctrine before this time.

After referring to "The Act for Preaching Catechetical Doctrine," the Representation concluded with a plea for remedy.

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Boston is careful to detail the steps in the process of representation for the purpose of showing that things were managed so as to inspire fear in the minds of the Brethren. The Representation was first



handed in to a meeting of the Assembly of 1721, whereat it was simply received without being read, and a promise made that it would be read at the next meeting. This was duly done, and a decision promised for the following meeting. Part of the management of the Committee of Overtures, that next dealt with the matter, was to urge a conference, and hint that without it there might be unpleasant consequences. Boston's particular comment is :—  
“ But they prevailed not to frighten us from what we had, not rashly, but after much serious inquiry and deliberation resolved upon.”<sup>1</sup> Owing to the illness of the Commissioner and the consequent sudden dissolving of the Assembly, the diet which should have dealt fully with the Representation could only refer it, without even a reading, to the Commission. To this, which met the day following, the Brethren were duly called and the Representation read. Hog was the principal spokesman. The reply came copiously in a “ flood of speeches, about the number of thirteen ; by which,” says Boston, “ we were run down, no man standing by us.”<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, the Moderator invited Boston to speak. Mr Ebenezer Erskine also took part, and with the Minister of Ettrick won commendation. Wodrow has it that “ Mr Boston and Mr Ebenezer Erskine spoke with some modesty, and many distinguished them from several others among them.”<sup>3</sup> As to one other speaker, Mr Williamson spoke very much to the point, however Wodrow may have regarded him, when he declared for the Brethren that reply was not possible to the many contrary speeches

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>3</sup> “ *Correspondence*,” Wodrow, vol. II., p. 585.

made, and that time should be allowed for a proper reply. Parties were then removed and a numerous committee appointed to meet next day. As to this, the notes in the Memoirs give that Mr Gabriel Wilson gained a point by insisting that the meeting of committee should be open. Its proceedings remained memorable to Boston by a claim to oratorical victory, and quite modestly put :— " Particularly, Mr Williamson did, in a point in debate, fairly lay Mr Allan Logan, Minister of Culross ; and I was encouraged by the success of an encounter with Principal Hadow." <sup>1</sup> At a further meeting of the committee, the Representatives had the weary task of waiting on to be called, and that from a forenoon hour till seven o'clock in the evening. The comment for the day is that " they had difficulty in agreeing as to their own management." <sup>2</sup> Another day passed, not in waiting this time, but in discussion ; and on the next, and before the Commission, the Representatives were warned to attend their meeting in August.

Perhaps this will be the best place for the inclusion of an important document of the " Marrow " Controversy, and one that, bearing the names of Mr Allan Logan, the Moderator of the General Assembly, and that of Principal Hadow, and giving the position of the leading men, might be regarded as the official Counter-Representation. The considerable text of this is taken from Principal Hadow's pamphlet, " The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected," and more than anything else that was contributed at the time—the Controversy was largely a gladiation—gives the

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

complete standpoint of those in opposition to the Representatives.

“ And we assert <sup>1</sup> : That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Surety and Mediator of elect sinners, and their only Saviour by price and ransom, who, by His expiatory death and sufferings, and meritorious obedience, has magnified the law, satisfied justice in their room, and brought in everlasting redemption and righteousness. That this His death is the only atonement and propitiation for lost sinners, the only sacrifice through which they have redemption and remission of sins. That by this perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, He has fully answered in their stead and place the demand of the law, as it is a Covenant of Works, both as to the obedience required for right to life, and the punishment threatened in case of failure ; fully satisfied God’s justice for all their sins against law and gospel, both before and after their believing ; and fully appeased His wrath, and purchased complete reconciliation with all grace and glory for them.

“ That all whom God has ordained unto life, and for whom Christ is become a propitiation, all those, and those only, He also effectually calleth by His Word and Spirit, in His own time, out of a state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, into a state of grace and life, infusing into them a supernatural principle of spiritual life, powerfully determining, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ by invincible grace, and causing them to accept, receive and rest on Him as He is offered in the gospel for righteousness and salvation. Which

<sup>1</sup> “ Antinomianism Detected,” Preface to the Reader, p. 3, Hadow, Edinburgh, 1721.

effectual calling is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything previously existing or foreseen in the sinner, who is altogether passive, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Ghost, he is thereby enabled to answer the call and embrace the grace offered and conveyed to him in the gospel.

"That those whom God effectually calls He also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone ; not by imputing the habit of faith, or any other grace, the act of believing, or any other duty, or act of obedience whatsoever performed by them, unto them as their righteousness ; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them as the only ground of their justification ; which being received and rested on by faith is accepted of God as performed by their Surety in their stead, and imputed to them for their redemption and righteousness. Nor have they any other plea to oppose unto the curse of the law and demands of justice, and for obtaining acceptance with God, and a title to eternal life, but the satisfaction, obedience, righteousness and merit of Christ the Surety imputed to them. That when a sinner gets a lively discovery of the holiness and severity of the divine law, indispensably requiring a complete and perfect righteousness, and a full answer and satisfaction unto the sanction of the broken Covenant of Works and the demands of the holy violated law ; and gets an affecting sight of his sinful and miserable state, his awakened conscience pursuing him with the cutting sense of his grievous guilt, and the dismal representa-

tions of his soul-danger as being shut up under sin, lying under the curse of the law, and under the sentential judgment of God, that he is worthy of death, and as having the wrath of God abiding on him. And when these convictions of sin are sharpened by the awful apprehensions of the greatness, majesty, sovereign authority, unspotted holiness, and impartial and exact righteousness of the all-seeing God, with Whom he has immediately to do in this matter as the Judge concerned, and before Whose bar he is sisted as a guilty and offending criminal, to be justified or condemned eternally. A sinner in this case, under the terror of the Lord, Who is a consuming fire, will soon be drawn from all pleas and pretences of any righteousness of his own. Nothing inherent in him, or done by him, can be here pleaded for his justification. He will now see that he needs a righteousness without the law, even the righteousness which is by the faith of Christ, and that he has no other foundation, no other ground to lean to, and rest upon for his deliverance from wrath and acceptance with God.

“That the self-destroyed sinner may obtain an interest in this righteousness, God requireth of him to believe on Christ. That the thing proposed in the gospel to a sinner to be believed by the direct act of justifying faith, is not that Christ is his, and hath died for him in particular ; nor, that God hath loved him and pardoned his sins ; nor, that Christ hath purchased redemption for every one of mankind without exception, and for him in particular, and that he shall be saved by Christ ; seeing these are not things revealed in the Word, and commanded to be believed by every hearer of the gospel. But the

thing proposed is the testimony of God concerning Christ the Saviour, and the method of salvation through Him ; and every hearer of the gospel is called, not only to give his assent unto the truth revealed, but also his consent unto the way of relief and salvation proposed to him, and so to accept of and receive Christ and to rest on Him alone for salvation, as He is offered in the gospel. That this faith justifies a sinner, not because of any intrinsic worth in itself, nor because of the other graces which do always accompany it, or the gracious actings and good works which are the fruits of it ; but only as it is an instrument, by which he receives and applies Christ and His righteousness for pardon and acceptance.

“ That though faith be required to instate a sinner into covenant with God and to interest him in Christ’s righteousness, yet is repentance also required in order unto the remission of sins, and is of such necessity to all sinners that none may expect pardon without it. And though all who fly to Christ must have a principle of spiritual life, and flowing therefrom a spiritual sight and sense of the evil of sin, its filth and hatefulness in the sight of God, its contrariness to His law, its demerit, guilt and power, with the dreadful curse denounced against it and wrath due to it ; a spiritual sight and sense of their lost and undone state in themselves, and their utter inability to deliver themselves out of that miserable condition, and utter insufficiency of all creatures to give them any relief, and of the absolute and indispensable necessity of a mighty Saviour to ransom them by price, and redeem them by power ; and a gracious discovery of the Lord Jesus as the alone Saviour,

and of the glorious way of redemption and salvation through His purchase ; and of the method of the application thereof by His mighty Spirit, with an heart affecting dislike of, and grief for sin as offensive to God, and as the source and spring of all their misery ; and an high esteem of the Lord Jesus as a complete and sufficient Saviour, worthy of all acceptation, and able and willing to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. And although all these things must be wrought in them by the Spirit of Life and Grace, and are requisite in order to their actual, express receiving of Christ, and closing with Him on His own terms ; yet they are not to bring them unto God, or offer them to Christ as a satisfaction for sin and cause of pardon, or as qualities to make them worthy, or to recommend them to the divine favour, or as any price in their hand to purchase and procure mercy from God, or an interest in Christ and His purchase (which are the usual calumnies of the more refined Antinomians against the orthodox doctrine) ; but these things are required to make them to give up with all conceit and confidence in themselves and their own attainments, to esteem highly the unexcited love and condescending mercy of God in Christ, to prize the free and ample offer of rich grace in the gospel, and to go fully out of them themselves, and close heartily and willingly with the Lord Jesus Christ.

“ That believers in their justification are freed from the revenging wrath of God and actual condemnation, and shall never fall from the state of justification and title therein obtained to eternal life ; yet personal holiness and good works are so indispensably required

in the justified, while they live in this world, in order unto their obtaining the enjoyment of eternal salvation hereafter, that without them none shall see the Lord, or be meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. And so indispensable is the obligation of the moral law upon believers, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in regard of the authority of God the Creator Who gave it, that it constantly binds them to hate and avoid all sin, to make conscience of every duty, and to follow holiness in heart and life. And their not observing of, and doing against its commands, are truly transgressions and sins, which deserve God's wrath and curse, and bring on guilt which is not expiated, but by the blood of Christ, and need to be pardoned for His sake ; and God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified, so that they shall never come into actual condemnation ; yet by their sins they may fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon and renew their faith and repentance.

" These assertions, we conceive, are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrines of this Church, contained in our Confession and Catechisms."

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Although the differences between the parties in the " Marrow " Controversy are near ; yet they are sufficiently distinct, and of important practical outcome, to be worthy of consideration. As to the fundamental matter of the law, divergence is very marked. The Representatives delighted to make distinctions within law—the law, as it is in the Covenant of Works, and the law, as it is the law of



Christ. The opposite party, while they used the distinctions common to all thinking in terms of the Covenant Theology, rather inclined to think of law as one. It is true that the "Marrow" men taught that law was a single and eternal expression of the nature of God, but in practice they set it too much in distinctions, and thereby caused law to be divested of its inevitableness. That is the impression one gets from wide reading of sermons, pamphlets and treatises.

Further, these distinctions were made the grounds of gospel freedom. To be free from the law in any form can be stated either in exultation at the fact, or with humility in view of the obligations of one's new state. To assert that God does not look upon the sins of believers as breaches of the Covenant of Works, that He will not proceed against them in the way of that Covenant, may be helpful in giving the comfort of deliverance to some; but it does not magnify law for the practice of life. The practical opposition to this attitude is to assert that one must humbly accept and rest upon the gracious privilege of the new state, and with every effort seek its duties.

Again, the extreme description of Suretyship, such as the "Marrow" gave, was a reversion to an historic emphasis, and no longer in place. There were circumstances, wherein the defiant plea was necessary—"I am already saved before thou camest," etc.—but normally one does not use that language. The simple reason is that it tends to an exceptionable attitude with regard to law.

As to the nature of faith, the choice is between an emphasis on the assurance that is in the appropriating act of faith, or a regard to the assurance that is a

consequent. "Marrow" doctrine, stressing promise and gift, naturally arrived at assurance in accepting. In sermons, this is Boston's constant approach. He appeals for one to embrace the promise and accept the gift. The personal result may too often be an attitude of over-confidence, not to mention a tendency to make this one-type experience the standard for all. The wise attitude of the official party was rather to insist that assurance should wait on experience. This secured its proper quality, and allowed for variety in experience. After all, any confidence that inheres to the act of conversion, or acts of conversion very widely regarded, should immediately and inevitably look to the difficult work of sanctification that has to be undertaken, and its only value is in view of that. One feels that however much this emphasis on assurance served reformation in historic religion, and also Scottish revivalism, it does not belong to the ordinary way of faith.

Then, with regard to repentance, the "Marrow" School were too formal. Their theory had no use for anything anterior to the act of faith. All that preceded a man's definite instating in the Covenant of Grace was of legal fears and terrors. They held that the repentance which followed from faith was the true, evangelical repentance, and alone had in inmost motive a worthy regard to the love of God. When this doctrine was pressed in teaching, it often went the length of proposing that nothing was to be done, nothing forsaken, and only the direct act of faith accomplished. Against that was set by the official party the genuine desire to be true to the facts of conversion. The opposing theory regarded the manifestations of divine influence in the soul prior to

the fiducial act itself, and was reluctant to dogmatise about it. The act of forsaking sin could be viewed, quite aside from being a work of merit, and as a very token of conviction and an acceptable regard to God. Behind it were the mysterious beginnings of the new life, and all repentance that continued from this, whether before or after the act of faith, could be regarded as of a kind. That there were legal fears and terrors there was no doubt ; but that these explain the phenomena of personal conviction, one would refuse to say.

The discussion of the extent of redemption is not specially important. Both sides were agreed as to particular redemption. The defenders of the "Marrow" sought to show that the author's position was orthodox. They understood him to deal mainly with the terms of the commission. Nevertheless, in point of strict doctrine, the official party were right in opposing the teaching that a deed of gift and grant, carrying personal right, had been made unto all. This was something quite beyond the position of the Confession of Faith.

More practical, and with the modification of the doctrine of assurance in the act of faith, was the official insistence on the oneness and inseparability of faith and life. This is the true victory in the "Marrow" Controversy. The Assembly owned justification as implying freedom from condemnation, and an assurance as to state and title to eternal life ; but it stressed the obligation to personal holiness. Along this line was its reluctance, which the Representatives did not share, to eliminate fear of punishment and hope of reward from a believer's motives. Higher motives there would be ; yet the

former things were to be kept as potent to fence one's will in the day of weakness.

No one dare assert that the "Marrow" men referred more to Christ than did their opponents. Central to the thinking of each was the fact of the blessed Suretyship of our Saviour. The difference lay here: that while the one sought the life of obedience by assurance in the act of faith, and as to state; the other, while desiring these to be definite enough, insisted that assurance should wait on the life of holiness, itself a humble and dependent experience through the mercy of Christ.

Returning again to trace the course of events, one finds that the Representers journeyed to Edinburgh in August, 1721, and waited on the Commission of Assembly. Three days were thus taken up. On the first, they waited to be called; on the second, they appeared before a committee having to do with the affair, and were informed that the said committee had prepared an overture for the Commission; on the third, and before the Commission, they were made aware that an overture had been prepared for the next General Assembly, and that the Representers were required to attend upon the November meeting of Commission. Worse than this futile journey and this tedious process of management, as Boston makes it out, was the feeling indicated by the comment:—"We were still deserted by all, not one offering to join us." <sup>1</sup>

It is not within present purpose to discuss the queries that were put to the Representers somewhat unjustly under process. The able answers to these were prepared, not by Boston, but by Mr Ebenezer

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 362.

Erskine, with the assistance of Mr Gabriel Wilson, who amplified on them and supplied most of the references. The only immediate point of interest was Boston's advice that the queries should be received. "I was clear," he writes, "that whatever should be the consequences, we should receive and answer them. What determined me to this was that I thought we were to lay our account with parting with our Brethren, as being cast out by them ; and, in that event, it would be safest, both for the cause of truth and our own reputation."<sup>1</sup> This was agreed to, and the queries were received with a protestation.

The General Assembly of 1722, by a long and laboured Act,<sup>2</sup> put an end to the official part of the "Marrow" Controversy. The prohibition on the book was renewed ; the request that the 1720 Act be repealed, refused ; and, because of reflections on the Assembly's conduct made in the Representation, the Brethren were rebuked. Boston must have felt that this was really of greater extent, for he wrote :— "I received the rebuke and admonition as an ornament put upon me, being for the cause of truth."<sup>3</sup>

Boston's protestation, made out in anticipation of this sentence, was received, but not read.

Subsequent events, and as they concern the Minister of Ettrick, are easily told. Boston made his first contribution to the continued controversy by a pamphlet entitled, "Queries to the Friendly Adviser." This was simply a list of questions set out without attempt to work them into a connected whole, and is the only thing of the kind among the

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> Acts of Assembly, pp. 548-556.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, p. 365.

pamphlets. It contains two interesting notes. One on the question of repentance, and in view of a preacher's self-questioning :—" Will he not be persuaded that a poor, wretched sinner ought to have been called to come to Christ for the very first grace to turn from his sins, without waiting one moment, till he himself attained to such and such measures of reformation ? " <sup>1</sup> The other deals with faith :—" Whether that doctrine, which denies all manner of persuasion and confidence, which our Reformers expressed by the term " assurance " in the direct act of faith, doth not rather tend to licentiousness, seeing it teaches such a faith as is very easily come by, a faith that hath not in it that true credit to Christ's word ? " <sup>2</sup> These references show how very much Boston was on the side of the " Marrow " teaching. Then, one would like to omit the mention of the Principal, but in all truth it must be set down. It is in a vehement and turgid sentence which queries :—" Whether hath not the ' Politic Disputant ' (an important pamphlet in the controversy) discovered the Principal's error, sophistry, disingenuity, blunders, airy confidence, and assuming spirit, slandering talent, wilful mistakes, uncharitableness, preposterous zeal for an untenable cause, unfairness, legal and anti-evangelical strain in his performance ? " <sup>3</sup> There is another reference :—" Whether a man, who hath entangled the Church into a labyrinth through his art, should not be animadverted upon, and effectually discouraged from such methods ? " <sup>4</sup>

At the suggestion of his friends, Messrs Wilson and Davidson, and in direct defiance of the repeated

<sup>1</sup> Queries, Boston, 1722, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

prohibition of the Assembly, and under the assumed name of Philalethes Irenæus, Boston in 1726 published an edition of the "Marrow" with notes. The avowal is made that this was undertaken in the cause of truth. The explanations have in view the positions maintained by Principal Hadow in his Synod sermon and in the Pamphlet, "The Antinomianism of the Marrow of Modern Divinity Detected." Official notice was not taken of this defiance of the enactment. But did it have any other form? In recording the fact that promotion did not come to him, Boston gives it as his opinion that all hope of removal from Ettrick was stopped by the displeasure he incurred for his part in the "Marrow" Controversy. This "staked him down"<sup>1</sup> in Ettrick.

Finally, and very like a repercussion of "Marrow" events, was Boston's participation in the second Simson trial. Too much has been made of the fact that he stood courageously alone in the Assembly. His opinion that a dishonour had been done to the Head of the Church was severe enough; yet he showed himself solitary, lacking considerateness. As against the verdict of the House that the Professor should be suspended, his wish, and no one adhered to him in it, was for a harsher sentence. He gave effect to this by dissent. Only after much private persuasion did he modify his position, but just in so far that he would not insist that the dissent be recorded.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Low's, p. 229.

## CHAPTER XI

### PREACHING

“ When thou studieth thy sermons, let the good of souls be before thee ; when thou preachest, let this be thy design to get some converted and brought to thy Master.” (Works, V., p. 27.)

UNDER this heading, it were best to begin by setting out Boston's “ ordinaries ” in preaching. These are taken from the chapters in the Memoirs, and are compared with the printed sermons. That Boston should be careful to make the entries is meant to indicate the importance a systematic scheme of preaching had for his mind. From May, 1708, to October, 1709, he took up again the doctrines handled in Simprin, the sermons on which were later published as “ The Fourfold State ” (Works, VIII.). Next followed discourses on Questions 1-29 of the Shorter Catechism, from October, 1709, to May, 1710 (Works, I.) ; with a necessary break for preparatory preaching in view of Communion, and—a commendable custom—the discussion of appropriate subjects arising out of it. From September, 1710, to the close of the year, the “ ordinary ” on St Mark x. 21 and 22, “ One thing thou lackest,” regarded “ Amiable Professors Falling Short of Heaven ” and bears the conscientious note that he was led thereto from the case of his own soul (Works, III.). A new “ ordinary ” on St Matthew xi. 28-30, “ Come unto me . . . ” and continued from January to August, 1711, dealt with “ A Solemn Call to Faith and Gospel Obedience ” (Works, IX.), and was



followed by one on Philippians iii. 1-12, that extended from August, 1711, to May, 1712, and had for its purpose, "The Commending of Christ to the Souls of the People" (Works, II. and IV.). Reverting to catechetical doctrine from August, 1712, to August, 1715, Boston dealt with the Commandments. Having heard one remark at Presbytery that he (the speaker) "had gone cursorily over the Commandments, as judging that best for the people," Boston declared his own mind and method in the rejoinder that "the fullest unfolding of the commandment is necessary to discover the need of Christ." His further comment runs :—"I have always observed narrow thoughts of the doctrine of free grace to be accompanied with narrow thoughts of the extent of the holy law."<sup>1</sup>

This long concentration on the Commandments was varied once and interrupted once. In February, 1714, and apropos of the times, Boston took up an "ordinary" for the purpose of "discovering the evil of Popery and the English Service" (Works, II.). In February, 1715, an old man, after walking the hill-road from Dalgleish to attend Church, collapsed near the west park of the glebe. Before the Minister could be called from his pulpit to come to him, he had died. Natural feelings and reflections at this sad happening were guided for a suitable time by an "ordinary" on 2 Corinthians v. 1, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved" (Works, III.). The sermons preached from Isaiah xxxii. 2, at the end of the Rebellion have been referred to in another chapter. During the remainder of that year of public confusion, Amos iv. 12, "Prepare to meet thy God," was

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 274.

found to be an appropriate scripture.<sup>1</sup> The "ordinary" from January to March, 1716, was decided by a storm in the Parish, and a dreadful mortality accompanying. The text chosen was Romans viii. 22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Works, IX.). With the continuation of the calamity, "the awful voice of Providence,"<sup>2</sup> Boston directed his pulpit interest by the scripture of Zechariah xii. 12, "And the land shall mourn" (Works, III.). The topics from August to December, 1716, are fittingly described as intended "for pressing unto the life and power of religion."<sup>3</sup> These were variously: "The Christian Life Delineated" (Works, X.); "The Study of Holy Scripture," and "The Observing of Providences" (Works, I.). Owing to the outbreak of scandals, these pleasant topics had to be exchanged for the doctrine of repentance, discoursed upon from January to October, 1717 (Works, VI.), whereafter catechetical doctrine was again the interest on till the Sacrament of June, 1718. The Questions up to Number 34 were taken.

Just before this Sacrament an attempt at Rockvale to burn the house by setting fiery peats to the thatch and so make away with an unwanted child prompted a message of judgment. Numbers xxxii. 23, gave the solemn word, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Works, III.). In passing, it is interesting to note this exercising of the discipline of the Church, that on the Sacrament day the Tables were "fenced" against all parties concerned in the incident. This was done by the Minister's public announcement.

Impressions remaining, Boston continued his topic

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

in Psalm cxlvii. 11, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him" (Works, IX.), then changed over to the grand theme of "The Saviour's Commission," from Isaiah lxi., and insisted on this till February, 1719 (Works, IX.). The next month, and beginning with the head of sanctification, Boston continued his sermons, till he completed the Catechism in the spring of 1720. Joined with this were the topics : against formality, Romans ii. 28 and 29 (Works, IX.) ; and against profaneness, 2 Timothy ii. 19 (Works, X.). A great sickness (the ague) and mortality kept the next "ordinary" to Psalm xc. 12, "So teach us to number our days" (Works, II.). That of the period from July till October, 1720, on "The Communion of Saints as One Bread" is a good example of a post-Communion topic (Works, III.). The January "ordinary" of 1721 had an Old Testament text, Proverbs viii. 35 and 36, "Whoso findeth me,—shall obtain favour of the Lord . . ." and was easily referable to the purpose on hand, "the preaching of Christ directly" (Works, X.). The preoccupation of the "Marrow" Controversy now shaped the topics. August to May, 1721-1722, was given to the doctrinal theme of "The Covenant of Works" (Works, XI.), and there followed the grand achievement of the preaching ministry, "The Covenant of Grace," discoursed upon for two years (Works, VIII.).

This study was varied with attention to the topics, "The Mystery of Christ in the Form of a Servant" (Works, VII.), and onwards with the themes, "Profane Swearing," "Sinful Anger," "Revenge," "Love of Enemies" (Works, V.). The year 1725 has these : "The Hiding of the Lord's Face"

(Works, IV.) ; “The Son of Man Coming to Save the Lost;”<sup>1</sup> and “Forsaking of Fountains of Living Water,” (Works, X.), essentially evangelical discourses. In the main, the year 1726 was similar, and dealt with : “Christ’s Titles,” and “Believing the Report” (Works, X.) ; “Resignation to the Will of God in Afflicting Providences,”<sup>2</sup> and “Acceptance with God” (Works, XI.). The “ordinaries” for 1727 are set in the good direction of “The Propagation of Religion to Posterity” (Works, V.). From August of this year, 1727, and reflecting the tragedy of his wife’s case—her mind clouded and she was debarred from ordinances—Boston dealt with the solacing theme of prayer (Works, XI.). Here is a note of these difficult days that touches the heart for very pity :—“I came to enter on the hearing of prayer . . . with the which I had some fond hopes that my wife’s deliverance might tryst.”<sup>3</sup> The next “ordinary” took a strong line against sinful presumption and declared “The Slow Proceedings of Providence Against the Wicked” (Works, VI.). The others for the year 1728 were : “We Walk by Faith” (Works, X.), “The Hazard of a Profession without Corresponding Practice” (Works, VI.), and the Doctrine of Sanctification (Works, VI.). The half of the year 1729 was given to the gloomy topic of “The Whole World Lying in Wickedness” (Works, V.). There followed a sermon on St Mark x. 30, “He shall receive an hundredfold,” then, in anticipation of death, and with the certitude of faith, his theme is “The Other World” (Works, V.). The deliverance concluded in June, 1730, when the preacher entered on an “ordinary,” noted rather

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 379.    <sup>2</sup> Memoirs, Low’s, p. 277.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

for its title than for its contents, "The Crook in the Lot," Ecclesiastes vii. 13 (Works, III.). Unmistakably this shows failing powers. The next on St Matthew vii. 13 and 14, and insisted on from April to December, 1731, declared "The Way to Life and The Way to Destruction" (Works, X.). From January to March, the concluding "ordinary" told of "The End of Time and the Mystery of God Finished with It" (Works, X.). On the twenty-sixth of March, 1732, the last sermon preached in Ettrick Kirk by this faithful Minister exhorted characteristically :—"The gospel is the last ship for Immanuel's Land. Earnestly seek of God by His Spirit the revelation of the mystery to you, the saving knowledge of it. Rest not till you be brought into the fellowship of the mystery. Carry always with you in remembrance the finishing of the mystery, and time with it, that you may be inured to look on the present state of affairs as passing, and to look for all things new."<sup>1</sup> On two other Sabbaths, the second and the ninth of April, the Ettrick folks stood at a window in the Manse to hear Thomas Boston's last "ordinary" in preaching. The text was 2 Corinthians xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Here are the preacher's concluding sentences :—"I say then, try yourselves as to this weighty affair, lest ye be found to be fighters against God, to spurn at His yoke, and to throw His cords from off you. Try yourselves, then, I say, whether ye be in the faith or not, as ye would regard the authority of the great Lord of heaven and earth, and would not fall into the hands of the living God, from which there is no deliverance."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Works, X., p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II., p. 510.

The urgency of the religious call, the set of his early conversion experience are both here. Believers and unbelievers are addressed ; the latter are to know their state and apply the remedy ; the former, in view of a secure generation, are to take evidence as to the genuineness of their state of grace. Thus, experience has its own to do with the doctrine of assurance.

Concerning the order of preaching that has been made out, one can commend its consistent relation to circumstances, its thoroughness in point of detailed treatment, and its comprehension. Boston justified his title, Minister of the Gospel, in a concentration on preaching, and its necessary accompaniment, intensive biblical study. The convention of the day dictated the infrequent changing of the text. However, by diligence Boston avoided mostly the overdrawn, obvious, and repetitive type of discourse that often resulted.

The framework of his thinking was the Federal Theology. He goes over the usual details :—the Covenant of Works made with Adam, as the federal head of the race ; the requirement of perfect obedience and its promise of life, and the curse in the event of default. From the “ Marrow ” Boston took the curious suggestion that Adam sinned the same day he was created. With regard to the Fall, the consequences of guilt and depravity, to him and to the race, are made out in extreme terms that leave nothing to human nature but the totality of corruption, and the uttermost inability to amend. The fact of sin was indeed “ writ large.” Thereupon, the Covenant of Grace is introduced with its head of impetration of all benefits, the Eternal Son. Boston conceived of a plan of salvation having been entered

into from all eternity and between the Father and the Son ; but he refused to regard it as a separate covenant, commonly called “ The Covenant of Redemption.” Nevertheless, he committed one of the crudities of his thinking, when in this connection and in a sermon, he describes the Father and Son “ striking hands ” <sup>1</sup> in ratification of the gospel-contrivance, the Covenant of Grace. As to the work of the incarnate Son, the emphasis is away from the life and on the death ; for the latter is the great act of sacrifice. The administration of the Covenant, wholly committed to Christ, the Trustee and Testator, as well as the Prophet, Priest and King, confers all general benefits. Specially included in these, and in keeping with “ Marrow ” doctrine, is His relation as a saviour to mankind sinners. “ Christ stands related as Saviour by office to the world of mankind.” <sup>2</sup> Faith is the alone instrument for instating the elect of the secret and eternal decree of God into the Covenant of Grace. This faith, and the justified state immediately resulting from it, are not doubtful things ; for they have assurance wrought into their very nature. From faith follow all evangelical graces, especially repentance. The new and indissoluble state of union with Christ has in it Fatherly chastisements for a believer’s sin, including the terrible desertions that so extremely express divine disfavour. The rule of obedience is the law, not as it is the law of the Covenant of Works, but the law, as it is the law of Christ, in the Covenant of Grace. Fear of punishment and hope of reward should enter very subordinately into the motives of obedience.

In connection with Boston’s preaching, there is a

<sup>1</sup> Works, I., p. 328.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII., p. 526.

matter of form that one would have passed, had not the preacher himself become author to it in a sacramental sermon entitled, "The Everlasting Espousals." This was his first publication, and had an extensive sale. The theme is the believer's union with Christ, and the text, Hosea ii. 19, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever." It takes acquaintance with some things in the sermons and commentaries of the eighteenth century to prepare the mind for statements like the following :—"This match was from eternity projected and concluded in the cabinet council of the Trinity. The Bridegroom and all His relations are well pleased with the match . . . yea, there is a full satisfaction with it through all the Bridegroom's country. There is a mighty stir about this match in the bride's country to hinder it. . . . All her relations are against it. . . . Her father, the devil, misrepresents Christ as a Husband she can never have a comfortable life with. . . . If that prevail not to make her lay aside the thoughts of it, he rages and threatens. . . . It is better for her to draw back in time, and take second thoughts of the offers made her by other hands." <sup>1</sup> In sermons the same kind of thing is always forthcoming, whenever this topic of union is discussed. This and the simple-minded use that was made of the language of the Song of Solomon must have given occasion to the scoffer. Perhaps Boston felt that, when he prefaced a certain sermon with the warning that the language was such as was used by the Holy Spirit in the Sacred Writings.

In no sense was Boston a legal preacher, though he gave good place to the preaching of duties, and that most effectively. His patriarchal social scheme,

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., pp. 494-496.\*



in so far as it goes, sets a high ideal for relationships. Masters are to be Christian stewards in their positions, and are to care specially for the religious welfare of their servants, by giving them all opportunities for improvement ; for learning to read that they might read the Word ; for private duties, such as secret prayer and personal fasts ; for attendance on ordinances, and the like. In his discourses on the Commandments (Works, II.), the relative duties of parents and children, of masters and servants, of Ministers and people, and of magistrates and subjects, are minutely discussed.

On the other hand, one cannot help feeling that they are mistaken who think that his opponents in the “ Marrow ” Controversy were legal preachers. To be a legal preacher was to preach duties without a reference to Christ in them ; or refining in the matter, to make the most occasional reference, and to proceed without constantly referring to Christ ; and, as it invariably happened, to preach duties and allow them to have the association of merit. These are the chief strains of legal preaching.

To the honour of all who avoided this, and whose zeal against it was marked, let it be owned that they kept that constant personal reference to our Lord, which is the source and power of Christian duty. Along this line Thomas Boston was pre-eminent. His Surety, even the Surety of the formal conceptions of the Covenant Theology, is always the Lord and Giver of Life. He is the dominant of every preaching “ ordinary ” and every virtue is token of His grace.

Just anxiety for this regard to Christ explains the displeasure of the Minister of Ettrick against Mr James

McGarroch, the Minister of Eskdalemuir, one of the visiting Ministers at the local Sacrament in 1727. Boston's complaint runs at some length :—" I was wounded and vexed with the two sermons on Proverbs xxviii. 13, ' He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,' wherein he explained repentance in these three things : 1. Confession, implying shame ; 2. Sorrow ; 3. Forsaking. Then he endeavoured to confirm the necessity of repentance in order to remission, held out the fear of hell as what all had reason to entertain, to move them to repent, and harangued against delaying of repentance. The whole was shut up with that we were not to do this in our own strength, but in the strength of God, and in dependence on Christ, from Whom the grace must come. He had not one word of confessing over the head of the great sacrifice, nor of the sin of our nature, nor was faith in Jesus Christ, or remission by His blood, once named, further than that dependence on Christ above mentioned may be thought to bear, far less faith as uniting the soul to Christ as the fountain of holiness. I had reason to think it was designed against the doctrine I preach." <sup>1</sup>

In several ways the offence was brought home. Finally, a letter making out the difficulty had to be sent to the senior Minister, and it bore that the two sermons had been composed before licence, and that they were not agreeable to his (Mr McGarroch's) ordinary strain ; that what was fashionable in certain quarters no longer satisfied his mind, and that his true position now was that sermons in a gospel strain were of first importance.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, pp. 387, 388.

## CHAPTER XII

### PAROCHIAL

“They are by far more polished in their manners than they were at that time (1707) and much more tractable and easy to me.”  
(Memoirs, p. 476.)

ATTENTION has already been given to Boston's difficulties with the Ettrick people. A few interesting notes on the same will fittingly introduce this chapter on the Parish. These are taken from sermons preached in 1710, and are as incisive things as one could venture to give from a pulpit. The text of an “ordinary” in preparation for Sacrament, Jeremiah l. 4 and 5, “Going and Weeping,”<sup>1</sup> allowed for the following: “Weep over, 1. Our barrenness under the means of grace. It is an observe on St Luke xiii. 7, that if a minister do any good in a place, it is ordinarily in the first three years of his ministry. God forbid it hold true in our case! 2. The slight and contempt of gospel-ordinances among us. Our Parish is not great, but our congregation is less, by reason of the principles, passions, and prejudices of not a few. But yet smallest of all is the company of the ordinary hearers, when those are taken off that come once in twenty days, a month, or six weeks; who are taken up with their beasts all summer in the fields, and sleep at home with them in the winter; yet some whose faces I seldom if ever can discern, but when I surprise them in their houses. 3. Weep over the slighting of Sacraments.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, Appendix I., p. 483.

That of baptism is dolefully slighted. If the child be like to die, then, without any regard to this congregation, or the struggles of this Church against private baptism, the Minister must come and give the child a name, without any more. As to the Sacrament of the Supper. . . . It is long since Christ made such a visit to Ettrick. O weep that there are so few to receive Him, so few fit to be admitted ! 4. Weep over the loose lives of many of us ; the abounding sin of swearing, that devil-like sin, . . . the lack of common honesty, . . . the brutish ignorance of many, even of some who pretend to be high-flown professors, the contentious spirit of those who live like fire-brands in the place. 5. Weep over the woeful divisions among us, that have prevailed to the breaking of us so far, that we are among the most broken and shattered congregations in the country. 6. Forget not, when ye are going, to weep over the frequent sin of uncleanness. What with fornications, what with adulteries, the place of repentance has been seldom empty, since the planting of this Church."

Keeping to the order of the above topics, one can note with satisfaction that the ministry, which was to be continued for twenty-two years from 1710, did its own efficient work. By integrity and faithfulness, Boston remade his Parish. In this he was ably assisted by worthy Elders. These men were well chosen ; for, while the Minister lamented the difficulty of obtaining suitable candidates for the office, he never lowered its personal requirements. This fact comes out in connection with his loss of members of the Kirk Session. " So rare is an inoffensive walk among us," he writes, " that it is extremely hard to get others in their room, who

would not be a reproach to the office.”<sup>1</sup> According to a minute of July, 1716, he secured both a considerable Session and a proper allocation of districts. The names and places are :—“ To James Geddes,—Potburn, Upper and Nether Phawhope, Broadgairhill, Kirkhope, Shorthope and Brockhoperig. To Adam Scott,—Cossarshill, Scabcleuch, Craighill. To John Scott and John Curry,—Ettrickhouse. (In 1716, the village of Ettrick stood at the place ; to-day a solitary shepherd’s cottage bears the name.) To William Blaik,—Midgehope, Deephope, Deephopegreen, the Smith’s, Gamescleuch, Glenkerry, Craigyford. To James Brydon,—Ramsaycleuch, the Miln, Thirlestane, Annelshope, Hopehouses. To Thomas Andison,—Tushielaw, Crosslee, Crookwelcome, Cacrabank. To Adam Linton,—Buccleuch, eastern and western, and both the Shiels, and Mount Common. To Walter Scott and James Scott,—Upper Dalgleish and Nether Dalgleish and the Gair. To Thomas Linton,—Yarrowhead.”<sup>2</sup>

In connection with the Ettrick eldership, one is entitled to enquire, Did ever an Elder of the Church of Scotland receive such a recognition as did a member of Boston’s first Kirk Session ?—“ But James Biggar, an Elder, with his family, were the family which was the most comfortable to me as a minister of the gospel. So it was all along, and so it continues to this day. May the blessing of God rest on them from generation to generation ! ”<sup>3</sup>

The second matter of lamentation in 1710, the slighting of ordinances, seems to have shown moderate

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> “ Ettrick Kirk Session Records,” vol. II., pp. 212, 213.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs, p. 226.

improvement with the passing of years. The extra Services, which were Boston's delight in Simprin, were never possible in his upland and scattered charge. Morning and Afternoon Worship sufficed. The Congregation of his hearers increased, and according to local tradition many came from neighbouring Parishes to wait on his ministry. This was specially the case, when he preached the sermons on the Fourfold State. Unlike many who have held the charge, Boston never conducted "away" Services. There is a record that he preached at Buccleuchshiel, but that was to regularise a baptism; and he once preached at Chapelhope to secure a proper occasion for a defaulting Elder giving in a confession to be read at a public Service.

With regard to the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, Boston adopted an unyielding attitude against private usage. His view, stated in a sermon, declared:—"It (a Sacrament) is not a business huddled up in secret, but done openly. The Sacraments are public actions of their own nature; and therefore our Church has wrested against private baptism and private communion."<sup>1</sup> This inexorable Minister was implored to give a private administration of the rite by a parent whose child was at the point of death. His refusal was absolute, till due intimation could be made to the Congregation. As it mercifully happened, the child lived and was brought to the Kirk for baptism. Boston records with satisfaction that in all his ministry never a child had died unbaptised owing to his adhering to his rule.

Then, too, Boston had his own strict way with

<sup>1</sup> Works, III., p. 605.

first communicants ; but that was all to the good. Candidates were required to attend his regular meeting (generally weekly) arranged for the extensive period of January to May, which course was completed by a personal and private examination. In 1728, he made a decided departure from common usage. Candidates were further required to attend a meeting of Kirk Session, and by their answers to questions prove their Christian knowledge. “ And if the Session be satisfied in this also, the party is to be put explicitly to consent to the Covenant (whereof he desires the seal), to be the Lord’s, live under Him, and serve Him all the days of his life, by answering expressly the following (or the like) questions : 1. Do you believe the doctrine of the Shorter Catechism of this Church, so far as you understand the same, to be the true doctrine agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and resolve through grace to live and die in the profession of the same ? 2. Do you consent to take God in Christ to be your God, the Father to be your Father, the Son to be your Saviour, and the Holy Ghost to be your Sanctifier ; and that, renouncing the devil, the world and the flesh, you be the Lord’s for ever ? 3. Do you consent to receive Christ, as He is offered in the gospel, for your Prophet, Priest and King ; giving up yourself to Him, to be led and guided by His Word and Spirit ; looking for salvation only through the obedience and death of Jesus Christ, who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem ; promising in His strength to endeavour to lead a holy life, to forsake every known sin, and to comply with every known duty ? 4. Lastly, do you promise to subject yourself to exhortation, admonition, and

rebuke, and the discipline of the Church, in case (which God forbid !) you fall into any scandalous sin ? ” <sup>1</sup> This was in 1729.

From the first administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in 1710, till the year 1731, the celebration was made annually, with the exceptions that are carefully explained. In 1717, the agitation about the Closeburn Affair proved an interruption ; in 1726, and owing to the mental state of Mrs Boston, omission was thought advisable ; in 1729, the *Memoirs* record that “ the people being withal straitened for victual to maintain their families, I could not find it in my heart to burden them with the strangers resorting to them on such occasions in great numbers.” <sup>2</sup>

The arrangements for Services were the usual—Fast-day Services, two Services on the Saturday, an high occasion of celebration and preaching on the Lord's Day, and a Thanksgiving on the Monday. Although Ettrick never had the crowded conventicles that took place at Portmoak, at Eastwood specially, and in many other places, yet, remote as it was, and situated in the country of dissenters, it had its own considerable gatherings. Boston's first Sacrament total was 57, and those parishioners. His last, in 1731, brought together a multitude for Ettrick, 777 communicants. Many of the visitors came long distances. Some from Edinburgh lost their way—this would probably be at the head of Altrive—and had to spend a night among the hills. These, however, were glad to own that the blessing they had received from their visit to the Ettrick Sacrament made up for all inconveniences. The collection

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, Appendix 3, § 10, p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, p. 421.



amounted to £77, 13s. 4d. Scots. For folks living near the Kirk, hospitality must have been an undertaking for the occasion. Very thoughtfully, Boston gives an indication of the same :—" There were about nine score strangers in Midgehope ; four score of them William Blaik, husband of Isobel Biggar aforesaid, entertained, having before baken for them half a boll of meal for bread, bought 4s. 10d. sterling worth of wheat bread, and killed three lambs, etc., made thirty beds." <sup>1</sup>

A curious thing happened at the serving of the last Table. Mr Davidson declined to give the Sacrament to the solitary person who had come forward. Boston saved the situation by presiding and declaring that the action was a continuous one and therefore not closed.

Reverting to those pulpit indictments of 1710, one finds that they contain the further charges of a loose manner of life, the divisive spirit, and the large topic of the Kirk Session Records of the times, the scandals of the Parish. As to dissenters, Boston had to admit that they continued in their opposition and that he had made very little of them. For other matters, there must have been the steady improvement that always follows on a faithful ministry. Boston must have felt that his years had not been spent in vain, when at the end he could write concerning his difficult Parish :—" They are by far more polished in their manners, than at that time (1707) ; and much more tractable and easy to me ; and fewer scandals fall out among them. The old dissenters continue immoveable ; but their increasing is ceased." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

## CHAPTER XIII

### STUDIES AND WRITINGS

“ Let it then be our daily care and principal study to acquaint ourselves with the Word of God, and draw from that infallible treasury all our knowledge as to faith and practice.” (Works, I., p. 55.)

FOR studies outside the text of the Bible, the record of the Ettrick ministry is extremely meagre. One can write with confidence that few men in the ministry of the Church of Scotland ever surpassed Thomas Boston in the intensity of his Scriptural studies ; and, for other professional reading or literary interests, were ever so strictly limited. From the treasures of Scottish and English literature, from the masterpieces of the classical past, his mind remained apart. On one occasion he turned over a page or two of Cicero for the purpose of improving his Latin style in the interests of the Latin text of his work on Hebrew accents ! This narrowing tendency, which he would have described as a “ dedication,” is indicated by a reference to the definite line followed from the Simprin period. “ From that time,” he records, “ I set myself no more to purchase parcels of books as before ; but got some particular books now and then, as I found myself disposed for them.” <sup>1</sup> In 1710, this occasional interest turned to the writings of Antoinette Bourignon. Two years later he has a note that he read Durham on The Song of Solomon and on Revelation. In 1713, he made a special study of the Roman mass-book and the English

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 250.

service-book. 1715 has an entry about Dempster's "Antiquities."

The Bible had always been and remained his library. Poole's Annotations helped for the Authorised text, and a keen interest in Hebrew studies made Boston a master of the Old Testament original. Hebrew had been the other subject at the Divinity School. Returning to it enthusiastically in 1710, he writes :—" I plied the Hebrew original close, with great delight ; and all along since, it hath continued to be my darling study." <sup>1</sup> One can venture to think that herein lay part-cause of his concentrated interest, and one of the secrets of his power with Scripture. After all, the Hebrew writings, which give their matter so freely over the language frontiers of the world, reserve something inner and incommunicable with the form of their sacred symbols. By prayer and diligent study Boston sought to enter into the spirit of the oracles ; and he so far attained that among the last acknowledgements of his life he made this :—" I bless God He brought me acquainted with the originals, (the Old Testament and the New Testament), and especially with the Hebrew text." <sup>2</sup> It goes almost without saying that the fruits of Hebrew studies are manifest throughout his discourses, and go a long way to account for his power as a man of God.

In 1713, and in the Manse of Selkirk, Boston saw for the first time a volume by the Rev. Walter Cross, M.A., London, bearing the extended title, " The Taghmical Art ; or The Art of Expounding Scripture by Points usually called Accents." This discovery commenced a specialised study, carried out under the

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

belief that accents not only help to fix the meaning of the text, but that they are essentially determinative of the same. These two notes show the position taken up :—" I came to be fully persuaded that the accents are the true key to the genuine version and sense of the Hebrew text ; and that they are divine ; that the true construction of the words of the text was to be determined by the accentuation, as the rule thereof to us, and not the power or value of the accents by what seemed to us the construction of the words." <sup>1</sup> Pursuing this study Boston came into contact with Professor George Gordon of Aberdeen, Professor William Hamilton of Edinburgh, and the notorious Lord Grange, against whose opinion he defended the biblical cosmogony. From further afield, he had the interest of Sir Richard Ellys of Nocton, Lincolnshire. All commended the application of the Minister, but all were non-committal as to his theoretical position. In 1738, and after his death, the results of these labours that meant so much to the author, were published in a Latin compilation, "*Thomæ Boston, Ecclesiæ Atricensis apud Scotos Pastoris, Tractatus Stigmologicus.*" One cannot read over the refinings of its paragraphs without feeling that this is one of the asides of Scottish learning ; yet Boston's main interest was truly directional.

Boston's publications during his lifetime are but a few volumes to the mass of compilations and editions that followed. His first work, "The Everlasting Espousals," a sacramental sermon on Hosea ii. 19, and published in 1714, has already been discussed. His next, "Reasons for Refusing the Abjuration Oath, 1719," was imperfectly done,

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, pp. 304, 305.

published without his consent, and is an exceedingly rare pamphlet. "The Queries to the Friendly Adviser" has already been considered, likewise "The Marrow of Modern Divinity, with Notes, 1727." The same year he published a sermon, "The Mystery of Christ in the Form of a Servant." For matter and form it is admirably done. The excerpt of one characteristic passage is of interest:—"O believer, look to the cross of Christ, and behold how He paid for every good work, every good word, yea, every good thought of thine. There is not one of these found, or that shall be found with thee, through the ages of eternity, but it springs from the merit and never-failing efficacy of Christ's service. And, had not the Lord Jesus taken on Him the form of a servant for us, there had never been one piece of acceptable service to God, one good work, word, or thought, found among the children of men, after the breach of the first Covenant." <sup>1</sup>

In 1720, there was published what in its full title is "Human Nature in its Fourfold State." There was a second edition, and under the author's own revision, published in 1729. In all, this book has gone through eighty editions, some being in Gaelic and some in Welsh. This publication calls for attention. The four "states" are—the State of Innocence, or Primitive Integrity; the State of Nature, or Entire Deprivation; the State of Grace, or Begun Recovery (a splendid alternative title!); the Eternal State, or State of Consummate Happiness, or Misery. This comprehensive theme was first worked out in the doctrinal sermons at Simprin, then amplified in a second preaching at Ettrick. Boston's

<sup>1</sup> Works, VII., p. 541.

friend and physician, Dr Trotter, was the first to suggest publication, and he was ably seconded by Mr Colden, the Minister of Duns. As early as 1713, the work was ready, but the unsettlement caused by the Rebellion delayed publication. The same year the work was transcribed and all Scripture texts entered in full quotation. The year 1719 brought both the acceptable interest of Treasurer Robert Wightman of Edinburgh, and his unwelcome attempts at smoothing the style. As to the book, he owned "that he found a vein of true Christianity in it, and therefore would contribute to the publication of it," but was peremptory in making out "that the style would be nauseous to the polite world."<sup>1</sup> The upshot was that Treasurer Wightman received permission to smooth expressions and make deletions; and he so managed the business that he caused much vexation by his interfering patronage. This was the first edition; the second is the author's own guarded work.

By this publication there came to the Minister of Ettrick the honour of having written one of the housebooks of Scottish piety. Many features make it so. For one thing, it supplied the place of a popular text-book of religion. It handled the heads of doctrine in a concrete and homely manner that appealed to the peasantry, and so rendered an inestimable service to our Country. Further, the book was composed sufficiently early to be particularly free from "Marrow" influence. It will be recalled that in the Simprin days, the Miscellaneous Questions prompted by the new book were things of the Study, and that only a tincture of "Marrow" doctrine appeared in the sermons. Thus, along with a few

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 337.

minor matters, the tenet carried over into the Fourfold State is that of the deed of gift and grant made to mankind sinners. Emphasis on assurance in the act of faith, which was matter of public discourse after the Synod sermon, is not represented in the book. If any other influence can be discerned, it will be the undoubted emphasis on the security of the justified state.

The fact is that the Fourfold State would never have become a book for Scotland, if it had been "outwith" either its spirit or doctrinal emphasis. The title of its chapter, "The State of Grace, or Begun Recovery," consciously or unconsciously was a fair recognition of both the tendencies at work in the teaching of the Church. Then, in the same chapter on Grace, one finds in the advice given to the unregenerate a scheme of practical directions and an attitude emphasised, to all of which Principal Hadow himself would have given his adherence. The passage reads :—" More particularly, 1. Receive the testimony of the Word of God, concerning the misery of an unregenerate state, the sinfulness thereof, and the absolute necessity of regeneration. 2. Receive its testimony concerning God, what a holy and just one He is. 3. Examine thy ways by it, namely, the thoughts of thy heart, the expressions of thy lips, and the tenor of thy life. Look back through the several periods of thy life, and see thy sins from the precepts of the Word ; and learn from its threatenings what thou art liable to on account of these sins. 4. View the corruption of thy nature by the help of the same Word of God, as in a glass which represents our ugly face in a lively manner. Were these things deeply rooted in the heart, they might be the seed of that

fear and sorrow on account of thy soul's state, which are necessary to prepare and stir thee up to look after a Saviour. Fix your thoughts upon Him offered to thee in the gospel, as fully suited to thy case, having by His obedience to the death perfectly satisfied the justice of God, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This may prove the seed of humiliation, desire, hope and faith, and put thee on to stretch out the withered hand unto Him at His own command." <sup>1</sup>

The last phrase indicates Boston's approach to the doctrine of the act of faith, and as it is in the Fourfold State. He began from the side of the Divine, and looked to the origin of life in the soul by the operation of the Word and Spirit. Viewed from the side of the approach of the Divine, the act of faith can only be the very humble and dependent one that is described so well.

"Boston's States," as a particular copy is inscribed, concluded with chapters that awed the mind at the thought of the tremendous and eternal issues of conduct. One, the State of Eternal Bliss, is given effectively enough in language that makes pleasant use of biblical symbols ; the other, calling in the aid of imagination gripped with terror, proclaims the state of the damned in hell. Still, inexorable judgment is the main theme :—"It would be a sight of admirable curiosity, if thou couldst wrap up thyself in some dark cloud, or hide thyself in the cleft of some high rock, from whence thou mightest espy wicked kings, princes, judges and great ones of the earth, rising out of their marble tombs and brought to the bar, to answer for

<sup>1</sup> "The Fourfold State," (an early, undated edition having Robert Wightman's Preface), p. 228 ; *cf.* Works, VIII., p. 177.



all their cruelty, injustice, oppression and profanity, without any marks of distinction, but what their wickedness puts upon them ; profane, unholy and unfaithful churchmen, pursued with the curses of the ruined people from their graves to the judgment seat, and charged with the blood of souls, to whom they gave not faithful warning ; mighty men standing trembling before the Judge, unable to recover their wonted boldness, to outwit Him with their subtleties, or defend themselves by their strength ; delicate women cast forth of their graves, as abominable branches, dragged to the tribunal to answer for their ungodly lives ; the ignorant, suddenly taught in the law to their cost ; and the learned, declared before the world fools and laborious triflers ; the atheist convinced, the hypocrite unmasked ; and the profane, at long run, turned serious about his eternal state ; secret murders, adulteries, thefts, cheats and other works of darkness, which scorned all human search, discovered and laid open before the world with their most minute circumstances ; no regard had to the rich, no pity shown to the poor ; the scales of the world turned ; oppressed and despised piety set on high, and prosperous wickedness at last brought low ; all not found in Christ arraigned, convicted, and condemned, without respect of persons, and driven from the tribunal to the pit ; while those found in Him at that day, being absolved before the world, go with Him into heaven. Nay, but thou canst not so escape. Thyself, whosoever thou art, not being in Christ, must bear a part in this tragical and frightful action.<sup>1</sup> . . . The godly wife shall

<sup>1</sup> " The Fourfold State " (Wightman's Edition), p. 415 ; *cf.* Works, VIII., p. 314.

applaud the justice of the Judge in the condemnation of her ungodly husband ; the godly husband shall say Amen to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom ; the godly parents shall say Hallelujah at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child ; and the godly child shall from his heart approve the damnation of his wicked parents. The sentence is just ; they are judged ‘ according to their works,’ Revelation xx. 12.”<sup>1</sup>

So much for the tragical—and now for the frightful :—“ To be closed up in a den of roaring lions, girded about with serpents, surrounded with venomous asps, and to have the bowels eaten out by vipers, altogether and at once, is a comparison too low to show the misery of the damned, shut up in hell with the devil and his angels. . . . What horrible anguish will seize the damned, finding themselves in the lake of fire with the devil who deceived them ! ”<sup>2</sup>

For this kind of description, one cannot compare the Fourfold State with the “ Marrow,” or indeed with any other writings, save those of the master-terrorist, Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline. One can only think of the religion of those days, as it was set into a background of mediæval darkness, and be thankful that Christ has led our countrymen out of the shadows.

Turning now to Boston’s main doctrinal work, “ The Covenant of Grace,” the preparation of which was his last chief interest, one finds “ Marrow ” influence very marked. 1. As to the deed of gift

<sup>1</sup> “ The Fourfold State ” (Wightman’s Edition), p. 406 ; *cf.* Works, VIII., pp. 307, 308.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 485 ; *cf.* Works, VIII., p. 365.

and grant :—Referring to the sin of unbelief, he finds that “ it lies in their not believing that to mankind sinners, and to themselves in particular, God hath given eternal life. This is what flies in the face of the gospel of God, which is the proclaimed deed of the gift and grant of Christ and all His benefits to sinners of mankind, declaring the grant thereof to be made to them, and calling them to take possession of the same as their own.” <sup>1</sup> The paragraph concludes with a designation of Christ, as made unto us (by legal destination) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. 2. As to faith :—The relative passage unmistakably points to the Synod sermon :—“ And thus you see you have an infallible ground for this act of faith, namely, the testimony of God that cannot lie. Wherefore, as ever you would be united to Christ, and so instated in the Covenant, believe firmly that Christ is yours, (the “ Marrow ” has it, ‘ Be verily persuaded that Christ is yours ’), and His righteousness, yours, and eternal life in Him, yours. If you believe that appointment of the Father, and the Son’s offer, you must needs believe this ; for, if they be real and not ludicrous deeds, they certainly convey to you a right to Christ, His righteousness and salvation ; so that, in virtue of them these must be yours, to be warrantably claimed and used by you as your own for the purposes of salvation.” <sup>2</sup> 3. As to repentance :—“ Now, when one is justified by faith, and new-related to God, as His Friend, Father and God, he is sanctified and brought to true and evangelical repentance, according to this promise. Being come to Christ by faith, he comes back unto God by Him in repentance. Whence it is called

<sup>1</sup> Works, VIII., p. 594.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 594.

repentance toward God, which is the end whereunto faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is the means. Then, and not till then, it is that the heart is set agoing in true gospel-repentance, pleasing to God.”<sup>1</sup> 4. As to pardon :—“ Here is life from the dead ; a pardon put into the hand of the condemned man, disarming the law of its condemning power. . . . And it is eternal life ; for all his sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath ; a formal remission of these of the two former kinds being granted, and a not imputing of these of the latter sort, as to that guilt, being secured.”<sup>2</sup> 5. As to justification :—“ Here is life to the soul, righteousness unto justification of life ; an everlasting righteousness ; a garment that never waxeth old, is never rent, nay, nor sullied ; but always continues in its original lustre, from the moment that it is put on. Wherefore, the life must needs be eternal, grace must needs reign through that ‘ righteousness unto eternal life ’ ; for being once put on, is never put off again for one moment in time nor eternity.”<sup>3</sup> 6. The life of obedience :—“ As ye will not be libertines in your life and practice, being dead to sin and the world with Christ, so ye will not be legalists in your life and practice neither, being also dead with Him to the law as a Covenant of Works. Your obedience will run in another channel than it did before your union with Christ, even in the channel of the gospel. Ye will serve in newness of spirit, in faith and love. The frowns of a merciful Father will be a terror to you to frighten you from sin ; love and gratitude will prompt you to obedience . . . and His atoning blood and perfect

<sup>1</sup> Works, VIII., p. 496.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 482.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

righteousness will be the spring-head of all your comfort before the Lord ; your good works but streams thereof, as they evidence your saving interest in these, are accepted through them, and glorify God your Saviour.”<sup>1</sup>

An additional note is required to complete this section on the writings of Boston. As to the Memoirs, which have their own place in Scottish religious literature, one need only remark their fine writing, their human interest, and their high spiritual tone. By themselves they convey a concentration of life that is compelling ; and along with the sermons, the dedication and power of a surpassing religious experience. When one has observed how limited in extent was the province Boston rounded off for himself, one has still the interest of discovering how infinitely much that yielded him. Thanks to his unremitting practice of writing out sermons in full, or in greatly detailed notes, there is to hand to-day the preaching of an efficient and justly reputed Scottish ministry. The quality, and the charm of the style of these, will always repay the task of reading the numerous and closely printed volumes, and the effort of adapting one's self to the thought-world of the older theology.

<sup>1</sup> Works, VIII., pp. 458, 459.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PERSONAL LIFE

“ The world hath all along been a stepdame to me.” (Memoirs, p. 476.)

WITH regard to the personal life, one could but expect from a man like Boston that the disciplines of piety, which were self-imposed to a degree in the Simprin days, were continued to the end of the Ettrick ministry. They proved no burden, since they were the adequate expressions of his tense spiritual life. There were times, when the ill-health, from which he constantly suffered, cast a gloom over his spirits, or made him liable to the foreboding suggestions of circumstances ; and these were the occasions when faith gave him victory. Such an experience was his in the year 1715, and at the tragic death of the old man from Dalglish. Boston's reaction thereto is characteristic. “ In answer to the former calls of Providence,” he writes, “ I spent this day in fasting, prayer and meditation, with respect to my leaving the world. I endeavoured to antedate my reckoning with my Judge, acknowledging my sins, and applying to the Lord, through Christ's blood, for pardon. I made a comfortable review of my evidences for heaven. I neither could nor durst name what sort of death I would desire to die ; but renewed my Covenant with the Lord with a view to eternity. I laid over my wife and children on the Lord.” <sup>1</sup>

It was at the close of this exercise that someone

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 281.

in the Manse sounded the death-bell, a coincidence that made an impression on his mind.

The same year brought an experience of extreme personal indecision. While attending the Sacrament at Maxton, and in the fields at Muirhouselaw, Boston underwent what was no affectation, but a very real trial of his spiritual state. His account of it reads :—  
“ I walked up and down with the Bible in my hand, opened at the place, 1 Corinthians vi. 9, holding it up towards heaven, as God’s own Word, pleading and improving it for the cleansing of my vilest soul. Mr Wilson’s great sermon of the good news brought in the gospel, from Luke ii. 10, and was as balm to a wounded soul and good news from a far country. And there I put all in Christ’s hand.” <sup>1</sup>

In July of the year of the representation to the Assembly, 1721, and showing the place the controverted doctrine had in the life of this man, a significant thing happened. In the extremities of a sudden and severe illness, the thought of the “ Marrow ” teaching about the gift and grant came to Boston. To his great comfort he again reflected on that part of his personal creed which asserted that God had given to mankind sinners, and therefore, by right to himself in particular, the gift of eternal life, and that he could claim it as his very own. In recording the experience, Boston is careful to point out the form his thoughts took.

On the fifth of December, 1729, Boston solemnised in Ettrick Manse what one might call a High Personal Fast. It was made in view of death. The action of this exercise is profoundly impressive. The

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs, p. 290.

description of it fills five pages in the *Memoirs*.<sup>1</sup> The principal features were, in brief :—He arose at a very early hour, and performed his ordinary devotions : these were never omitted, even for extraordinary occasions. Then he reviewed the periods of his life, read his two personal Covenants, and setting his experience to the requirement of the Decalogue, commandment by commandment, he measured his conformity. Humbled for his sins he made confession. There followed renewed acceptance of God's Covenant of Grace and the forming of a personal Covenant. This was subscribed as in the Presence. After the interval of a day, the exercise proceeded as formerly by prayer and meditation. Ultimately there came to him the strengthened conviction, which was the reward of this intense spiritual effort, and which is told in this paragraph :—  
“And then I saw so clearly the matter concluded between God and my soul, that I could plead and see that upon the separation of my soul from my body my soul should be carried up by angels unto Abraham's bosom, by virtue of the Covenant ; and my dead body be carried down to the grave in it, and lie there in it, and by virtue of it be raised up at the last day, reunited to my soul.” After prayer he sang with gladness of heart Psalm xvi. 5, to the end, “God is of mine inheritance.”

On this second day he set himself to gather evidences for heaven. These are given in his own words :—“1. I see that I believe the gospel with application to myself, and find that my expectations from it do ultimately resolve themselves on the faithfulness of God in the word of the promise of the

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, pp. 429-433.



gospel. 2. I find my soul acquiesceth in, being well pleased with, the Covenant of Grace, as God's plan of salvation in Christ ; and that I have come into it with heart and goodwill. 3. I find my heart so far at odds with sin that, if there were no other hell, but just leaving one in his sin for ever, ' He that is filthy, let him be filthy still,' my heart upon that sentence against me would break in a thousand pieces. And is not this the work of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ in me ? 4. I have a hope of heaven through Jesus Christ, and the Lord knows it moves me to desire, long, and seek after being made meet for it in purification from sin. 5. I love the purity of the divine image expressed in the holy law, and every line of it, so far as I discern it ; and even there where it strikes against the sin that most easily besets me. 6. I have a measure of confidence that I will get complete life and salvation. . . . I am heartily out with myself with respect to all the periods of my life . . . and have no confidence of acceptance with God, but in Christ crucified, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

These last experiences, which are not so much selected as taken in their prominence out of the Memoirs, are of a kind. By these spiritual confidences, the anxious way of real personal assurance is indicated and commended.

With regard to the Boston Family, notice has already been taken of John Boston and Jane Boston, born at Simprin. The surviving family was completed by Alison Boston, born at Ettrick, who married James Anderson of Altrive ; and Thomas Boston, Junior, born at Ettrick on the third of April, 1713, who succeeded to the charge. Thomas Boston,

the father, died on the twentieth of May, 1732. A local tradition gives that among his last requests to his son were that he should not marry an Anderson of Tushielaw, and that he should never leave the Church of Scotland. Thomas Boston, Junior, was inducted to Ettrick on the fourth of April, 1733; in the month of April, 1738, he married Elizabeth Anderson of Tushielaw; Minister of Oxnam from 1749, he demitted his charge in December, 1757, and as the Minister of a Congregation in Jedburgh became the first Moderator of the Relief Presbytery in 1761. He died in 1767.

Thomas Boston, Senior, was the only one of the name to live and die a Minister of the Church of Scotland. His widow survived him till March, 1737, and was buried in Ettrick Churchyard.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONCLUSION

FOR a summary estimate of the life of Thomas Boston, one must begin with his determinative experience of conversion. This, as it was formed by Henry Erskine, even for his young and sensitive spirit carried the associations of a great deliverance, from the guilt and sin of personal life, from the depravity of our nature in Adam ; and it issued in a sense of freedom, and towards an intense religious life. The education of his day, and the preoccupations of the National Church, caused him to intensify his activities further. The resultant gains were a disciplined and deepened life of piety, and a good concentration on the work of a parochial ministry. Against historic divisions in the Church, he maintained its testimony and order ; and by his faithfulness commended its work. His action in refusing the English Abjuration Oath was initially of value ; but he erred in remaining a non-juror to the last. At the time of the Rebellion, his efforts were directed naturally to the maintenance of the Protestant Religion, which served, and still serves, the true destiny of our Country. As to the Controversy, one can recall that it was he who really began it by reintroducing that almost forgotten volume, "The Marrow of Modern Divinity," and he identified himself very ably with the evangelical position that came to strength amid the discussions. Thereto he was greatly determined by his sympathies, arising as they did from his early experiences. The

particular emphasis he made will be recurrent in the life of the Church. For his day, it was a pity that what was aspectual should have occurred within a group of tendencies that made a party in the Church. Boston's true interest lay in an increase in the general knowledge of the doctrine of grace ; and, while he would have sympathised with the Brethren, who used the Representation of 1721 for their Testimony in 1733, had he been spared, he would never once have thought of making the journey from Ettrick to Gairneybridge.

The name of Thomas Boston joins worthily with the greatest title of service one can have in this life, namely, Minister of the Gospel. By his preaching and his several publications, along with those that were given posthumously, he rendered a service of insistence to Scottish religion ; and, as in last days he preached to his people from an open window in the Manse, so out of the integrity of his private life his final word to his countrymen is of the Faith of our Fathers which will bless and keep every true Scottish home.



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